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HOW MUCH SHALL I GIVE?

A SERIES OF TRACTS

ON THE SUBJECT OF

SYSTEMATIC BENEVOLENCE.



PHILADELPHIA:

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

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I. The duty of giving away a stated proportion of our income. By the Rev. William A. M.

II. Systematic Benevolence. By the Rev. D. M. Hook.

III. Address on Systematic Benevolence, by the General Assembly to the Ministers and Churches under its care.

IV. The Great Gift. By the Rev. W. B. Plumer, D.D.

THE METHODIST

CHURCH IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

IN THE YEAR 1857

CONTENTS.

- I. The duty of giving away a stated proportion of our income. By the Rev. William Arthur, A. M.
- II. Systematic Benevolence. By the Rev. D. V. Smock.
- III. Address on Systematic Benevolence, by the General Assembly to the Ministers and Churches under its care.
- IV. The Great Giver. By the Rev. W. S. Plumer, D.D.

THE
DUTY OF GIVING AWAY

A STATED
PROPORTION OF OUR INCOME.

BY WILLIAM ARTHUR, A. M.



PHILADELPHIA :
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ADVERTISEMENT.

SOME changes, not affecting the sense, have been made; such as the reduction of "pounds" to "dollars," and the omission of a few local names and references to books.

THE DUTY OF GIVING AWAY

A STATED PROPORTION OF OUR INCOME.

I PROPOSE to submit a few observations *on the duty of giving away a stated proportion of our income.* For the practical handling of the subject, I know not that I can do better than attempt to

Explain the duty,

State the grounds whereon it rests, and

Plead for practical attention to it.

When we speak of the duty of giving away a stated proportion of our income, we do not mean *that all persons having equal incomes are bound to give away equal sums, however their other circumstances may vary.* Power to give away may be modified by three circumstances,—family, locality, and station. Of two persons, each receiving a thousand dollars a year, one has seven children, the other is a bachelor. It would be strange if the single man might justly spend upon himself as much as the other must spend on his family, and might inno-

cently give away only as much as he contrives to give. This is a difference of family.

Of two persons having the same family and the same income, one lives in a large city, where rent, taxes, and provisions are high; the other in an agricultural village, where these are all cheap. Is the latter to take the full advantage of his easier circumstances for his private purse, and give none of it to benevolence? This is the difference of locality.

Again, two persons have each five thousand a year. One from small beginnings has reached that point by industry and saving. Without hereditary claims, without public expectations, and with invaluable habits of economy, he is royally rich on his five thousand a year. The other has inherited the same income from a father who was in the habit of spending fifty thousand a year. A number of servants, retainers, and tradespeople have what amounts to a vested interest in his revenue; the public have expectations; and, worst of all, his habits are formed on a costly model, so that he is not only perplexed, but really poor, with his five thousand a year. This is the difference of station.

Each of these three branches of modification has innumerable offshoots, going to show, that to require all who have equal incomes to give away equal sums, would be neither just nor generous.

Nor do we mean that all persons are to give away the same proportion of their income, however its gross amount may vary. Two brothers live in the same town, and have the same family. In this case

station, locality and family are equal. The elder is just able to provide his children with a small house, frugal fare, homely clothing, and a passable education. He is quite unable to lay up anything which would help to open their way in life, when the critical period of settlement shall come. Yet, knowing to whom he and his owe their daily bread, he gratefully devotes a tenth of his income to the service of God.

His younger brother has been otherwise prospered. His children sleep in spacious rooms, and play among their own flower-beds; their clothing is rich, their board generous, and their education costly. For each of them he is able to lay up in store, and knows that, if they do not pass through life with comfort and respect, it will be their own fault. And is this man, for whom Providence has done so much more than for his brother, to content himself with rendering the same proportionate acknowledgment as he? For the latter to give a tenth of all is an effort; an effort which he feels, and his children feel, in "their coats, their hosen, and their hats." For the other to give a tenth would be no effort whatever; it would never affect his comforts, nor even his luxuries, no, not the crumbs that fall from his table. It would affect nothing but his hoarded money. If we hold that his brother should give a tenth, and he should give no more, then we hold that the lesser mercies demand the more touching acknowledgment, and that God's superior bounties may sit more lightly on our hearts.

Take another case: You visit a friend when he is

twenty-five years of age, spending little on his establishment, and giving away a tenth to Him who gives him all. You return to his house when he is fifty. Now he is spending on his establishment ten times as much as before. Why? Because the Lord "hath blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land." The same labour which, twenty-five years ago, yielded him a modest income, now brings a twentyfold return. When Providence has thus multiplied the proportionate productiveness of his soil, is he to confine his acknowledgments to the same proportion which he rendered when his efforts were far less fruitful? If he does, gratitude diminishes as bounties enlarge. We would, therefore, strongly contend that when Providence greatly increases the return of labour, or throws abundance into our lap without labour, we are bound to acknowledge such mercy—mercy which distinguishes us above the ordinary lot of men—not by thank-offerings adjusted to the scale of those whose blessing is less than ours, but by aiming to keep pace with the peculiar bounty which, while some pine and others struggle, gives us "all things richly to enjoy." One man's tenth is more than another man's third. I know one venerable man—one of the men whom my soul loveth—who, at the outset of life, adopted the vow of Jacob, "Of all that Thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth to Thee;" but so far from confining himself to this, I know that some years ago, he was for that year giving away not a tenth, but four tenths. How Providence has dealt with him you may judge from the simple fact, that on

one day he might be seen in the morning giving away a thousand dollars to one religious society, and in the evening five hundred to another.

On the other hand, we do not mean that persons are bound to give away all their income, so as to admit of no increase of capital, or extension of property. There is a large class of promises which attach temporal advancement to humble and godly industry, as a reward from Providence. "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life." (Prov. xxii. 4.) "Such as are blessed of Him shall inherit the earth." (Psalm xxxvii. 22.) "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, and delighteth greatly in His commandments. Wealth and riches shall be in his house." (Psalm cxii. 1, 3.) Liberality itself, the very virtue for which we are pleading, is encouraged by the prospect of abundance. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." (Prov. iii. 9.) One of the punishments threatened against improperly gotten wealth is its decrease, while lawful labour is stimulated by the hope of plenty. "Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished, but he that gathereth by labour shall increase."

This passage not only offers to industry the prize of increase, but states the true relation of labour and capital. "He that gathereth by labour shall increase." Labour creates capital; capital rewards labour. Where there is no labour, capital is lumber; where there is no capital, labour is beating the air.

The effect of well-directed labour is to increase capital; the effect of increasing capital is to lighten the burden and raise the pay of labour. These effects depend not on the will of men or masters, but are wrought deeper than either can permanently reach, into the groundwork of human relations, by the Builder of all. That accumulation of capital which results from the blessing of Providence on lawful industry, so far from contravening the purposes of benevolence, directly and most efficiently serves them. Two brothers enter this city, each with a capital of \$100,000. The one seeks out twenty thousand poor families in the city and country, and gives away all his capital among them, five dollars to each. The other invests his hundred thousand in a factory. Return in five years, and mark the effect of the two sums upon the people. Of the first hundred, the only trace you can find is here a decayed bonnet, there a worn-out cloak, and in some humble homes a very grateful recollection; but no permanent public benefit, no sensible improvement in the condition of the labouring poor. As to the other, it fed and clothed many families from the first day; to-day it is feeding and clothing many families, and it is promising to do so in perpetuity. At the same time, the profits which are known to have accrued to its owner, are attracting other capital to a like investment, so as further to improve the prospects of all the labouring population of the neighbourhood.

It is possible, and more than possible, that in this case the one who gave away his all, did it from the

noble motive of self-denial; and most assuredly he will have his reward. It is also possible that the other acted from the commonest selfishness, and can look for no credit beyond that of worldly wisdom. But the fact, that he who acted from a noble motive did no permanent good to the poor, while he who acted from a low one did much, forces us to inquire, Did not the one unconsciously violate, and the other unconsciously follow, a law of Providence? Does not the one case indicate the existence of a law against the dispersion of property in indiscriminate gifts, and the other a law in favour of its employment to elicit and reward useful labour? Land and money are the two bases of wealth. Cultivation is to the one what commercial investment is to the other. Religion does not require that either should be made away with, or neglected; but that, when laid out for increase, the Lord should be honoured with the first-fruits of all the increase.

But here many sincere and admirable Christians will tell me, "You are arguing directly against the words of our Lord. He commands us, 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth;' and to do as you say, is plainly to break this very clear command." If that be so, all my reasoning on the point falls to the ground; and he who permits riches to increase is no Christian. But is it so?

We have already seen that a class of promises exist which must be nullified, if no servant of God is to permit his possessions to increase; and such commands as, "Provide things honest in the sight of all men;" "Charge them that are rich.....that

they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate," &c., enforce duties which exist not, if no man has a right to have possessions, except only in such a degree as will enable him to continue alive. No command ever contradicts another command; and no command is ever meant to supersede a whole class of promises. With these two principles in view, we take this command, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," and place it beside another which is like unto it: "Take no thought for to-morrow." Am I to be told that I break this latter command, if I take thought for duties and responsibilities which do not press to-day, but will to-morrow? Without doing so, I cannot fulfil my duty to God, to my neighbour, or to myself. The highest obligations which are laid upon me, require thought, and action, too, for the morrow. This runs through all the ways of Providence. Most of the duties for which he holds us responsible, call us to work for the morrow. For to-morrow the plougher ploughs, for to-morrow the sower sows, for to-morrow the reaper reaps, for to-morrow the miller grinds, for to-morrow the weaver plies his loom, for to-morrow the builder frames his roof; and did we put a stop to all labour which is for to-morrow, we should at once reduce the activity of the human race to a few of the most menial occupations. The call to take no thought for to-morrow, is certainly not a call to neglect duties, and evade responsibilities; but a call to trust in Providence when the time only to trust has come. When I have done for to-morrow all that is laid at my door, then let me not encroach

upon the province of Him who alone can rule the future and the contingent, by troubling myself with them. Let me simply do this day the work which is this day due; and though long and impenetrable months may lie between me and its result, for that I must trust Him whom the sparrows trust; saying cheerfully, "The Lord will provide!"

When in the one of these two glorious words of Christ the letter is so plainly to be interpreted by the spirit of all Scripture, it is not probable that in the other the letter is all we are to look to. But if you will appeal to the letter, then to the letter you shall go. That letter is, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, *where moth and rust do corrupt.*" Now moth and rust do not corrupt property employed in active service, as commercial investment. They only corrupt hoards which are heaped up idle, not doing the purposes of Providence, not contributing to the welfare of men. Against such stores only does the letter of this precept bear, and against them let all denunciations peal!

But though we do not believe that the letter of our Lord's precept was ever meant to prevent His servants from accepting such increase of their goods as His bounty might give them, while they glorified Him with their first-fruits; we deeply feel that in the spirit of that precept many weighty lessons lie. It seems to say, "*Do not resolve to be rich.*" To you, young man, it seems clearly to say, "Do not make up your mind to die worth thirty thousand or a hundred thousand dollars." Any such resolution is evil, and out of it woes will come. "They that

will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." (1 Tim. vi. 9.) It also says,

Do not make haste to be rich; even without formally resolving to win a high prize of wealth, do not follow after riches eagerly, or long to see yourself enriched with abundance. "He that maketh haste to be rich shall *not be innocent*. . . . He that hasteth to be rich hath *an evil eye*, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him." (Prov. xxviii. 20, 22.)

Do not adopt selfishness as a means of wealth. Our natural reason and the carnal mind prompt us to say, "If I am to be rich, all that I get I must keep. Holding, nursing, guarding all that comes into my hands, it must grow to be of some account at last." Such a mode of calculating is confronted by the spirit of faith and love which breathes all through the Bible. Viewing a Power infinitely above the petty advantages of hoarding, it cries, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty." Take this proverb to your heart. There is joy and glory in it. It links your hope of personal comfort with the Father of all benevolence. Say, "If there is wealth to be gotten by greed, by holding, by shutting my heart against gushes of generosity, and my hand against self-forgetting acts of goodness, then such wealth be to others, and its fruits be far from my children!" Say, "Wealth so gotten is no wealth: it is but a metal coffin for the affec-

tions. If wealth come to me, let it come from the Great Giver, at whose bidding I cast my bread upon the waters!" "The blessing of the Lord *it* maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it."

Do not trust in riches. In the forms of popular speech, we may often trace real and important distinctions. Nothing is more common than to hear persons speak of a man idolizing various objects of earthly affection. Yet of many such objects we never hear it said they are made gods. We often hear of a man making an idol of his child; but people do not say he makes a god of his child. With regard to money, however, it is quite otherwise; they readily say, "He makes a god of his money." Yes; for he not only loves the money and doats on it, but he puts his trust in it. All the faith he has centres in it. It is his Providence; on it his future depends; it is his hope for his children; his hope of name and honour after death. Assail it, and you assail his rock, his strong tower, his reward. Take it away, and in his own feeling you have bereft him of *all his dependence*. Surely this is idolatry! "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, *nor trust in uncertain riches*, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." (1 Tim. vi. 17-19.)

These seem to me to be some of the chief lessons taught us in this precept of our blessed Master; and

he who cordially follows these, glorifying God, and benefiting man with liberal first-fruits of all his increase—on him, for my part, riches and plenty may freely come. In his progress all good men will rejoice; the poor will bless his riches. If, like Abraham, he has an old servant, he will say, with smiles, “The Lord hath blessed my master greatly; and he has become great: and He hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses.” (Gen. xxiv. 35.)

We do not mean that Christians are bound to draw a line, and say, “Beyond this limit, no matter what the bounties of Providence may be, my possessions shall never go.” O, what a blessing it had been to thousands had they adopted such a resolution! Many who prospered up to a point which they would have once thought affluence, not then content, pressed forward, and by a few errors dispersed the gatherings of a lifetime. Many for years employed their growing wealth to do good; but at length they had outgrown their religious strength, and, like a youth failing under his own stature, their virtues died of decline. Happy would it be for many, did they set a limit to their aims, and add nothing beyond! Whenever this is done in the spirit of humble faith, surely it is good and acceptable to God. But I cannot undertake to teach that it is laid down in Scripture as an incumbent duty.

Away on the very horizon of sacred history, in the glory of its dawn, we see—shall I say, a group?—three personages; the first, shrouded with that excel-

ling light which no man can approach unto; the second, dark with that darkness which, thank God, neither our words nor our imagination can picture; the third, a man of like passions with ourselves. To this man the Maker of all points the tempter of all, and says, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil?" And who is this of whom we have such testimony as never was borne to other man—who is held up to the accuser of saints, as a triumphant instance of the redeeming power of grace? He is one whose wealth is almost countless, who has distanced every contemporary, and is the greatest of all the men of the East. It is plain that his immense possessions were no stain upon his "record" which was "on high." But ere you exult, in the belief that you may innocently accumulate to an indefinite amount, carefully mark how he employed his wealth.

While his children were holding family feasts, and the joy of abundance was in all their homes, he was "continually" rising early, going to the altar of God, and offering up offerings in large number. And how did he live among his neighbors, while thus honouring his God? "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.....I was eyes to the blind,

and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor; and the cause which I knew not I searched out." (Job xxix. 11, &c.)

Go thou and do likewise. Thus continually and liberally offer unto God; thus bountifully and actively distribute to man; and so long as we see you so doing, "may your garners be full, affording all manner of store!" I, at least, will cheerfully leave it to Providence to fix the limit of your increase. But one word: as you proceed upwards, one earnest word: Walk warily on those heights! Heads are often turned up there; and fearful gulfs yawn under you if you fall!

While, however, we do not contend that to let "riches increase" is forbidden, or even that to permit that increase to an indefinite amount is contrary to clear Scripture, we do contend:—

That not to give away any part of our income is unlawful:

That to leave what we shall give to be determined by impulse or chance, without any principle to guide us, is unlawful:

That to fix a principle for our guidance, by our own disposition, or by prevalent usage, without seeking light in the word of God, is unlawful:

That when we search the Scriptures for a principle, the very lowest proportion of our income for which we can find any show of justification, is a tenth of the whole:

That, therefore, it is our duty to give away statedly, for the service and honour of our God, at the very

least one-tenth of all which He commits to our stewardship.

These are my views as to the duty for which I am now pleading; and are, I presume, however shades and points may vary, in substance the views of the gentlemen by whose call I stand here.

AS TO THE GROUNDS ON WHICH THIS DUTY RESTS
 Let us suppose that it does not rest on any grounds whatever; that the idea of such a duty is without foundation; that we are each at liberty to choose what proportion of his possessions he shall give away, from the nearest approach to nothing upwards; so that if one give a tenth, another a nineteenth, and a third one thousandth part, they differ not in this—that one is liberal, the other covetous, and the third a wretch; but in this—that the one is liberal, the other less liberal, and the other less so still; each of them practising a virtue, a voluntary virtue, only in various degrees. This a plain meaning and practical application of a notion which floats in undefined thought, and is often expressed in vague language, by many excellent people,—a notion about Christianity leaving the amount of liberality to the private will and disposition of each individual.

If this view be correct, then it follows that in Christian morals we have *one virtue which has no minimum limit*, no expiring point; which continues to be a virtue down to within a hairbreadth of nothing, no matter how largely mixed with the opposite vice. Shall we apply this principle to the other virtues? for instance, Truth? Are we not apt

to think that, however much truth may be in a statement, if mixed with a little deception, the virtue of it is gone? And as to honesty, Do we not feel that whatever amount of honesty may be in a transaction, if mixed with any cheating, the virtue is destroyed? And are we to hold that any miserable gift, somewhat short of nothing, which a covetous man may give, is yet an act of liberality, though in a low degree? Is liberality the one virtue which Christianity has abandoned, in this cold world, to every man's whim, and never pronounces violated, so long as it is not totally renounced and abjured? Surely there is some point far short of nothing, at which gifts cease to be "liberal," and begin to be "vile;" at which a giver ceases to be "bountiful," and deserves to be called a "churl!"

One thing is certain, that if Christianity has set no *minimum* limit to generosity, it *has set a* maximum limit. If we are at liberty to press down our generosity to the lowest discernible point, we are not at liberty to push it up without check. Christianity commands plainly, "Owe no man anything;" so that I cannot give away money while I am unable to pay my debts, without violating the laws of my religion. She also plainly declares that if any man provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an "infidel." Therefore I cannot give away money while my own are unprovided for, or left to be provided for by others, without violating the laws of my religion. Is it, then, probable that Christ's good Gospel, while marking points in the upward progress of

generosity at which it would pass into injustice, has marked none in its downward progress at which it would pass into selfishness?

If Christianity has left benevolence entirely to private decision, it also follows *that, while those branches of expenditure which regard our self-interest are regulated by fixed circumstances, that which is for the glory of God is at the mercy of chance.* The three circumstances already named—family, locality, station—decide for each of us, to a great extent, the scale of most items of our outlay. Your rent is tolerably well fixed from year to year, your board is not very uncertain, your dress, and every other claim of self-interest, has its proportion not ill defined; and is it probable that while every outlay that nourishes self is regular, that only outlay which tends to free you from earth, and connect your hopes with a better country, is precisely the one which the religion of Jesus has left to be the football of passion or of accident?

“I do not mean,” you say, “that we are at liberty to give by mere chance, without fixing some principle; I only mean, we are not bound to a tenth.” Not bound to a tenth! No, most surely we are not bound to a tenth. If that be your meaning, then thy heart is as my heart. No principle of the Gospel, no precept of the law, ever glances in the direction of binding us to a tenth. But is it possible that you mean something which you do not say? Is it possible that when you speak of not being bound to a tenth, you mean we are at liberty to make up our minds not to give a tenth, but to give something

less? Well, so let it be. Suppose that a Christian, without offending against his religion, may spend on self-interests more than nine-tenths of his income; then it follows that *It is lawful for a Christian to be more selfish than was lawful for a Jew*. This conclusion may not be agreeable; but it is clear. Every Jew was blessed with a religion which checked his downward, earthward tendency, at the *very least* to this extent—that, of his all, one tenth went to sacred things, and thus connected with them his affections and his hopes. Less than that he could not consecrate to the service of his God, without a trespass against his religion. If, then, a Christian may give less, his religion elevates him in a lower degree, leaves him to be more earthly without guilt, and less noble without reproach.

One other consequence follows. If a Christian may, according to his religion, lawfully devote less than a tenth of his income to holy purposes, then CHRISTIANITY HAS LOWERED THE STANDARD OF A VIRTUE, and that the virtue of liberality! The Jew who gave less than one tenth was branded by his religion a sinner. That system, which we regard as so much more earthly, so much less spiritual and heavenly, than ours, ever held the standard of pecuniary self-denial up to that point, at the very least. And is it come to this, that our Christianity, our religion of love and sacrifice, let down the standard of this special virtue below the point where it stood when she came to warm our world? We know the thousand contrivances to escape from this conclusion. But, however often you cite the difference be-

tween an agricultural and a commercial people; however much you talk of Levites, tribes, rent-charges, and adjustments; however many lanes you enter from your starting-point, if you follow any one of them to its end, it will land you in front of this conclusion: CHRISTIANITY HAS LOWERED THE STANDARD OF A VIRTUE.

But I will not further follow the supposition that the duty of giving away at least a tenth of our income has no grounds; for the conclusions to which it leads are not satisfactory. I will now assert that it has grounds. They may be thus stated:—

GIVING IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. This position needs no special argument. In support of it the whole New Testament cries aloud. The system of redemption is, from first to last, one prodigious process of gift. God loved the world, and GAVE His only-begotten Son. The Son loved us, and GAVE Himself to death for us all. This giving does not rest at the point of bounty, but passes on to that of inconceivable sacrifice. Every man on whose spirit the true light of redemption breaks, finds himself heir to a heritage of givings, which began on the eve of time, and will keep pace with the course of eternity. To giving he owes his all; in giving he sees the most substantial evidence he can offer, that he is a grateful debtor; and the self-sacrifice of Him in whom he trusts says, far more pathetically than words could say, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

It is ordained by Christianity that giving shall be

both bountiful and cheerful. It does not satisfy the demands of our religion that we give; we must give much. "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly." This refers to the *amount* of gifts; but having decided that the amount must be unsparing, Christianity is not even then content; that unsparing amount must be given with a cheerful heart, "not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver." One of the oddest things in all argument is, that this passage is sometimes resorted to as cover by those who claim liberty to give away as little as ever they please. Let them turn to the passage (2 Cor. ix. 5-7), and they will see that it is not left to them or to any man to decide whether giving shall be on a bountiful or a sparing scale. That it is not to be sparing, and is to be bountiful, is settled; and then a cheerful heart is commanded in addition. The twofold requirement is a gift not *sparing* as to amount, nor *grudging* as to feeling. One may cheerfully give a sparing gift who would grudge a bountiful one; and one who, from "necessity," from pressure, or shame, gives a large gift, may grudge while he gives. Do not spare when you give, and do not grudge when you make sacrifices! This is the voice of a passage which some would fain use to cloak their unwillingness to make liberality a regulated and well-considered virtue.

A sparing, a bountiful, and a grudging giver may all be met with in your every day life. You call on a wealthy gentleman, Mr. Close, for a benevolent object. "Yes; it is a good cause, every one ought to do his share; but really one has so much

to do, one is always giving. However, I have great pleasure in giving my mite; you are perfectly welcome, Gentlemen, to this trifle:" and he gives you five dollars. You modestly hesitate, tell him that much will depend on his example, and that, from his position, you had hoped for something considerable, say five hundred dollars. "O dear no! I could never afford that. That is a subscription for a rich man. I am very happy to give my mite; but I never thought of any sum like that."

From this sparing, but cheerful giver you pass to another, Mr. Goode. He just hears you, and, puts down his name for a thousand dollars. This is neither sparing nor grudging.

From him you go to Mr. Sharpe. He hears your statement. "O yes! all the principal people are giving to it. One must do something respectable. Will you let me see your book, gentlemen?—What! Goode down for a thousand dollars! I know why he did that. It was to be ahead of me, or rather to spite me; for he knew I would never be behind him. It is not the first time he has served me so; but I'm not going to let him stand before me for the sake of five hundred dollars." And so he puts down a thousand.

Now, while this gift professes to be an act done out of consideration for others, it is really done out of consideration for himself; and, while his hand was giving, his heart was grudging.

The greedy man who would grudge a large gift, but makes a merit of a small one; and the vain man who must stand high, even in giving, and grudges

the price he pays for his importance, are equally far from Christianity. A bounty that reaches the point of sacrifice, and a heart-charity that rejoices in such sacrifice, can alone meet the call of the Gospel.

It is ordained by Christianity, that our bountiful and cheerful giving shall be in proportion to our means. “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, *as God hath prospered him.*” Here the scale which regulates giving is decisively taken from the hand of impulse, fashion, or personal disposition. Whether our giving is or is not to be in proportion to the bounties of God to us, is no matter of debate. The principle of proportion is enjoined in the New Testament. But the passage decides nothing as to what application of the law of proportion is to be made. One who gives a hundredth part of his increase, observes a proportion as much as one who gives a fifth; and might plead that he was giving as God had prospered him, if he could find ground in Scripture for the belief that one hundredth would be acceptable.

This scripture, “As God hath prospered him,” forces us to ask, What *is* giving in proportion to God’s gifts to us? If we seek an answer in the New Testament, everything seems to push up the scale to a proportion from which we nearly all shrink away. We find liberality in a rich man sanctioned up to “half his goods,” as in the case of Zaccheus; and in a poor widow up to “all her living,” as with the two mites. We find a whole church selling their property, and giving away without limit; and though that example is never enforced on others. it

is never reproved. We find the church of Macedonia, in "depths of poverty," and also in "a great trial of afflictions," abounding in "riches of liberality;" and their record is written for the gratitude of all ages, that they gave "beyond their power." These early Christians, who thus rejoiced to bestow, are melted to yet greater sacrifices by words so winning and so mighty as, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was *rich*, yet for your sakes He became *poor*, that ye through His poverty might be rich."

Turn where you will in the New Testament in search of an answer to the question, "What is giving as God has prospered me?" you are surrounded by an atmosphere of fervid joy and love; solicited by a feeling of which the words are, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men;" and the deeds are every good work, distributing, communicating, making sacrifices with which God is well pleased: you are stimulated by examples of Apostles forsaking all, individuals selling all, churches bestowing all, the deeply poor giving to the poorer, and, to crown the whole, the MASTER giving always, and storing never; and in the end giving Himself a ransom for all. You feel that if you are to take your answer to the question by honest, logical inference from that Book, any thought of a tenth is out of sight, and you must contemplate a style of giving which no one I know—perhaps I do know some of the poor who would—but which no one of the comfortable classes, in our day, would think of following.

If, fearful to press New-Testament precept and example, we go to the Old to learn what the Lord counted acceptable in ancient times, we find that each head of a family among the Jews was bound by direct enactment to give a tenth of all his yearly increase to the support of the ministering tribe of Levi. He had to pay a second tenth for the support of the feasts; a third tenth for the poor once in three years; and in addition were the trespass offerings, long and costly journeys to the temple, and sundry other religious charges, all imposed by Divine sanction; besides free-will offerings. Taking all these items, it is undoubted that among the Jews *every head of a family was under religious obligation to give away at least a fifth, perhaps a third, of his yearly income.*

Passing on to the Patriarchs, you find Jacob, when houseless, awaking from his sleep by the roadside, solemnly vowing to the God of his fathers, that if only "bread to eat and raiment to put on" were granted to him in his exile, a tenth of all should be rendered back in honour of his God. And further up, where you see Abraham, the father and representative of all believers, standing before Melchizedek, the type, not of the Levitical priesthood, but of our Great High Priest, he gives him a tenth of all. The goods were the property of others, of which he would not, for his private benefit, take "from a thread to a shoe-latchet;" but yet he asserted the claims of the Lord upon all.

Thus, in the patriarchal dispensation, a tenth seems to be the portion which the Lord accepts.

In the Mosaic dispensation, that proportion is raised to at least a fifth by express ordinances; and when we come into the Gospel dispensation, we are sensible at once of a notable rise in the temperature of benevolence. Here the idea of a religion less generous, less self-denying, less superior to sordid hoards or personal comforts, is not only inadmissible, but atrocious. Whatever of heavenliness and large heart was in the religion of Prophets, receives an expansion and not a chill, and selfish man is placed at last in his highest school of unselfishness.

Whether, then, we take the Old Testament or the New, the lowest proportion of giving for which we can find any pretext, or foot-hold whatever, in command or in precedent, is one tenth. He who fixes on this, deliberately fixes on far less than was required of a Jew. He who fixes on less than this, deliberately excludes all Scripture instruction, and chooses a standard for which no part of God's word offers a justification.

But several objections are taken against our conclusion; some of which we ought to notice.

"In urging upon us to give away a tenth, you are reviving the Levitical law, and that is abolished."

The difference between those who hold that it stands, and those who hold that it is abolished, lies perhaps more in word than reality. Those who hold that it stands, would hardly contend that the letter is in force; for that was, that the tenth should be given to the tribe of Levi, which, to the letter, we cannot fulfil. And those who hold that it is abolished,

surely do not mean that its spirit is abolished. The spirit of that law is, "Of Thine own have we given unto Thee." This is not abolished; and, blessed be God, never will be! And surely you do not mean that this spirit, a spirit so right and good, in passing from Judaism to Christianity, forsook a more sensitive body, for one grosser and heavier with earth! We need not pause to show that, quite independently of the Levitical tenth, the other requirements of the Mosaic law demand more than a second tenth; and that the Patriarchs gave their tenth before ever Levi was.

"*But we are not now to be brought under rule; for the law is love.*" I know that some who thus speak, do so upon the best grounds. A good man has a small income and a large family; he has also a warm heart, and his neighbours know it. Though he never adopted any specific proportion, he is conscious, and so is his wife, by daily experience, that he gives away "to his power, yea, and beyond his power." When he hears of fixing a rule, and walking by it, he feels that for him it is unnecessary; and he pleads, "*The law is love.*" Were all like him, most gladly should we leave it here. But many whose heart has never led them into the troubles of over-giving, gladly catch up his words, and, as a simple defence against giving something definite, cry, "*The law is love.*"

To you who use this objection we have only one thing to say: If the law is love, will you keep the law? Then all we contend for, and more than all, is secured. Among laws, none is near so exacting as

love. It has never felt, never done, never given enough. It is "never ending, still beginning." Its great things of yesterday, are little things to-day; and its great things to-day, will be little things to-morrow. *The law of love!* It is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart, and thy neighbour *as thyself*." And you invoke the law of love to save your money!

As a matter for personal guidance, the definite meaning of this expression is something like this: "The heart that is right is full of love. Love fulfils all law, and secures the rights of God and man. Therefore the heart that is right is a law to itself, and needs no other rule. But my heart is right, and is sure to fulfil the law without special rules." Is that safe reasoning? If your heart be so right to-day, may it not wax cold some other day? and would it not be well to have a test by which to try its warmth? Or may there not be some like me, who cannot trust so surely to their heart; but feel that it is a wholesome thing, to have clear rules whereby its dispositions may be often measured?

Love may be a good reason for going above rules; but it is the worst in the world for staying below them, or without them. It is a law of love which binds a man to provide for the comfort of his family; but surely that is no reason why he should refuse to give his wife a regular allowance for the expenses of housekeeping.

"But you speak of giving a tenth:—that is an arithmetical law; and you will never bring the hearts of Christians under a cold arithmetical law."

This is a very tremendous objection. Half the sympathies of an audience are in danger of being lost the moment they hear that our rule is a cold arithmetical law. Arithmetic sounds of school-books, and counting-houses, and markets, and hard problems, and dry statistics, and other ungenerous things. Well, it is so, and we cannot deny it; to say you are bound to give away at the very least a tenth of your all, is to speak the language of arithmetic. But is the principle the less sacred for that? "Remember the *seventh* day to keep it holy." That is an arithmetical expression! And is there any thing unhallowed in the Sabbath because a square seventh is cut off from our time, and is just in that arithmetical proportion to be consecrated to God? Again: it is ordained that a Bishop shall be the husband of but *one* wife, which is an arithmetical law.

But if our spacious friends who object to narrow arithmetical laws will observe their own givings, it will prove that somehow arithmetic follows them wherever they go. For if you do not give a tenth, but a ninetieth, even that is an arithmetical proportion; and if, instead of giving a tenth all the year through, you only give a tenth of one day's income for the whole year, still that is an arithmetical proportion,—though it might be hard to ascertain it: and, in fact, go down however low you may, if you give any thing whatever, at any time whatever, it still bears an arithmetical proportion to the whole. Did we name a tenth as the high standard of Christian benevolence, and confine ourselves to it, we

might be taunted with arithmetic; but when we name it only as the lowest point at which any footing can be found, and leave all above free, that arrow flies below us.

“But if you teach men to give a tenth, they will give that and be content, though they ought to be giving much more.” This is an objection of real gravity. Doubtless, did we succeed in producing generally in the churches the state of feeling, that all were bound to give at least a tenth, many would think themselves generous in giving that, when perhaps a third or a half would be only their just proportion. But how do matters stand at present? Multitudes of sincere Christians are royally content, though they give nothing like a tenth; and could we succeed in bringing up the church generally to that proportion, (though far below what we hold to be the due of many,) the state of things then would present a wonderful improvement on that existing now.

But I question whether adopting the principle of proportion would tend to make men content with the *minimum* proportion, after they were abundantly prospered. So far as my knowledge of its practical working goes, my impression is the reverse. It is my pleasure to know many men who, at the outset of life, or early in life, adopted Jacob's resolution to give a tenth. These have all been prosperous men. I do not know one of them but shows that the effect of his early adopting the principle of a tenth, has been to prepare him for a higher proportion when years of plenty set in.

And is it not natural that such should be the effect? There is a great, not to say a tremendous, power over man in that very principle of arithmetical proportion which it is so easy to spurn. When an arbitrary proportion of our time or goods is taken,—a proportion for which reason has no more to say than for any other,—what is the effect upon the mind? It serves as a practical claim of sovereignty on the part of the Creator. It says, “This is claimed, because all might be claimed. He who accepts this, owns all, and holds you to account for the rest.” It is not probable that year after year one will carefully set apart a fixed proportion for the service of his God, without becoming habituated to feel that he is neither author nor owner of any fraction of property, but merely steward; and that He at whose feet he lays the first-fruits is the Lord, the Giver of all. Such stated setting apart is a practical keeping of the precept: “Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth.” And whoever thus begins life by keeping a law of proportion, is the most likely of all men to advance his proportion, as his Benefactor augments his blessing.

“*But we ought not to speak of a tenth, a fifth, or any other proportion; our duty as Christians is to give all.*” That is not correct. Our duty is not to give away all; but to employ all according to the will of God, and so as to be pleasing in His sight. It is our positive duty not to give away all; but to spend suitable proportions of our income in supplying our own wants, and those of our families, as

also in fulfilling any commercial or other calling for which property is needful. Our objector replies, "Of course, what I meant was, all *after our reasonable wants are supplied*. We ought to give absolutely all the surplus, and not save any."

In the lips of some—and I could name the very man—this means noble and incessant liberality; but in the lips of most, it would just mean giving as much as was perfectly convenient. If every one, before assigning any portion as a thank-offering to the Giver of all, is to spend what meets his views of providing for his own and his children's wants, present and prospective, in ninety-nine out of every hundred cases it will prove that the surplus for giving away is next to nothing. In many cases, giving liberally will be postponed till family provision is made, till resources are fairly in advance of demands; and by that time *all heart for giving will be gone*. In fact, this rule of giving away all you have to spare, is that by which multitudes think they are living; whereas, could they get an account of all they gave on this system last year, and resolve next year to consecrate the small proportion of a tenth, they would be utterly astonished to find how much the latter exceeds their habitual liberality.

One strong reason for some definite rule lies in this: That we have far better memories for our virtues, than for our obligations—for the dollars we give away, than for those we receive, or spend upon ourselves. Even truly excellent persons, who have not *tested* their givings, monstrously exaggerate the amount of them to their own mind. The relish of

one act of liberality remains long upon the lips; and some who believe that "their hand is never out of their pocket," would be confounded if the great account where all items are entered were placed before them, and they saw how miserably little their endless deeds of generosity amount to. The first expenditure of all should be that which sanctifies the rest—that which is not for self, or flesh, or earth, or time, but for the Lord, for gratitude, for the training of the soul, for store in heaven. Our own morsel will be sweeter, and more wholesome too, when the due acknowledgment has been first laid, with a bountiful hand and a thankful heart, on the altar of the Saviour. "Ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, *until* the selfsame day that *ye have brought* an offering unto your God." (Lev. xxiii. 14.) This was the spirit of the first-fruits—a spirit of noble preference for the honour of God over selfish care.

Another advantage of deciding that a consecrated proportion shall take the precedence of all other outlay, instead of counting on giving what we have to spare, is this: It materially affects our scale of personal expenditure. Our ideas of what is necessary are ruled by our knowledge of what we have to spend. A gentleman with five thousand a year, who means to give away what he can spare, unless he be a man of extraordinary generosity and decision united (which cases are never the rule), forms his whole scheme of expenditure on the basis of five thousand a year, and finds it hard, now and then, to spare a dollar or two; not that he is unwilling, but

all his resources are pre-engaged. Another with the same income has his regular BENEVOLENT FUND, into which the first fifth of his income goes. The effect is, that all his plans of expenditure proceed on the basis of four thousand a year; and thus while the Benevolent Fund is strong for all legitimate claims, it pays itself—perhaps more than pays itself—by acting as a check upon the Vanity Fund, the Hobby Fund, the Folly Fund, and several other exigent funds on which thousands of our domestic revenues are wasted. We, then, hesitate not for a moment to prefer the rule of giving regular first-fruits, even in the low proportion of a tenth, over the rule of giving *all* we have to spare. This last, while for a strong and holy man the highest of laws, is for the great majority a law which amounts to no more than is now prevalent.

“But, at all events, surely you would not apply your rule to the poor.” Certainly not to the destitute. One object of liberality is to relieve and comfort them. But rising above those who need help, upon whom do you fix as poor? The man who can afford to spend money on liquors or segars, is he poor? The woman who can afford to spend money on fineries, is she poor? It would be no small blessing, if some of those well-meaning but ill-judging persons who are continually telling the poor that they are too poor to do any good, or support any cause, would stand out of the way of the poor. The worst thing you can do for a man, is to pauperize him. If a poor man reads this—and I hope many will—I would say to him, Never count that man

your friend who teaches you to lean on other people. He is your friend, and your children's friend, who teaches you to lean alone on the good providence of God, and on your own right hand.

On the very same grounds that it is a serious injury to a man to pauperize him, it is a great service to teach him to save something, and give it away. The one induces feebleness, the other power: the one inclines him to be listless in earning, and thriftless in spending; the other to be alert in earning, and careful in spending. The moment a man begins to save something and give it away, he rises in the social scale, and takes his place in the family circle of benefactors. As to the godly poor, I will test this whole question of proportionate giving by their verdict, sooner than by that of any other class. Let some of those who would bid us not ask them to give, learn what they do, and, perhaps, they will look anew to their own proportions. And when one sees how the poor tax themselves by waste, by hurtful luxuries, by ill-spent time, how often their spare money, not pre-engaged for good ends, is the cause of their ruin, one feels indignant at those self-constituted friends of theirs who would protect them from the calls of generosity—the very calls which would raise and make men of them; and we say, Stand out of the way of the poor!

There was One who was no amateur in poverty, but had known it from the manger, in His own lot and that of His friends. Did He think it a pity that the widow should give away her two mites? or did He tell Mary that the exceedingly costly box

of ointment was too much for one of her means? And when the Prophet heard from the widow of whom he had begged a little bread, that she was so poor as to say, "I have not a cake," did he think it would be a loss to her to give, for the Lord's sake, a little of her meal? He who delights in mercy has never yet denied to the poor the joy of giving. St. Paul plainly contemplates giving as the immediate result of labour in the case of one recovered from the class of thieves. "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his own hands the thing that is good, *that he may have to give to him that needeth.*" (Eph. iv. 28.) If, then, a reformed thief, just beginning to earn his own bread, is at once to set before him the joy of giving away a share of his earnings, who dare degrade the working men of Christendom, by telling them they are to look on themselves as meant only to feed their own wants? O what a blessing had it been to many a poor working man, what a saving to his means, what a comfort to his home, had his father trained him to honour the Lord with the first-fruits of all his increase!

"But there are those whom we do not call the poor, who yet are in more straits than they—persons of small means and respectable position." I should be the last man on earth to press hard on that class. There are no sorrows I would hold more sacred than theirs, who unite in themselves the feelings of the rich and the fortunes of the poor. Poverty is a cold wind; and the higher your situation, the colder it blows. But this is to be said: However sacred may

be the claims of respectability, of the desire to honour your family, and maintain your appearances, more sacred still are the claims of gratitude, piety, and goodness. Nor will it ever prove that what you painfully spare from your own respectability for the purpose of honouring your God, will fail to bring back its reward. "Them that honour Me, I will honour."

These are the chief objections to our argument; and having thus noticed them, I now proceed to—

PLEAD FOR PRACTICAL ATTENTION TO THE DUTY.

By "practical attention to" it, I do not mean that we should be much interested in the subject, feel ourselves in a very generous frame, and intend to be much more liberal than we have been; then comfortably come round, in the course of a week or two, to our old habits. By "practical attention to" it, I mean something different from all this,—something decided, something instant, something permanent and life-long. I mean that every one, in solemn gratitude to God, and under an humble sense that He is owner and they are stewards, should now, and irrevocably resolve that by the help of Divine grace, henceforth to the day when money ceases to be treasure, "OF ALL THAT THOU SHALT GIVE ME, I WILL SURELY GIVE THE TENTH TO THEE."

This resolve once come to, it only remains that, at stated times, the consecrated portion of what the Lord gives you be set apart for His service; and that it be cheerfully given away. Those stated times may be either weekly, quarterly, half-yearly,

or yearly, according as you can ascertain your income. Those are points of detail of the utmost importance, which any one who is really resolved will soon adjust for himself. But my point is to obtain the firm resolution of steady and habitual liberality for all that remains of life. I do not want a temporary surface glow, but a permanent quickening of the circulation, by greater strength at the heart. Life is ebbing, time is flying, opportunities of doing good are daily growing fewer, and the moment is come for something practical. I plead, then, most importunately plead, for practical attention to this duty *now*. I plead for man's sake, for the Gospel's sake, for *the Lord's sake*, for your own sake.

I PLEAD FOR MAN'S SAKE, *that men may learn that Christians are sincere*. Thousands dwell in the midst of us who never thought of formally disbelieving the word of God; yet they have a habitual suspicion, more than a suspicion, that the practical religion of religious men is only a seemly garb which is beautiful on Sunday, serves to go to church in, and is at all times respectable. This suspicion is one of the most serious obstacles to their own conversion. There are in this city hundreds who would be brought nearer to salvation, did they only feel in their conscience that the faith, hope, and love of Christian men are not a profession, but a matter of the heart. Now all worldly men have one deep instinct: they believe that *a man is sincere in what*

he will pay for. If they, then, see religious men cheerfully and largely paying for their religion, the habit of doubting their sincerity will gradually be worn away. And surely those principles are worth little which are not worth paying for. A religion that did not check our selfishness could not come from a God of love. He who is not willing to pay for his religion has no right to have a religion. Creatures there are, and creatures, too, calling themselves Christians above all names, who would fain take the benefit of Jesus' religion of love, without it costing them any thing! O, could we lift one such soul up and up into yonder celestial light, and there set it upon the Sea of Glass:—as it saw its own image reflected in that sea, with so much of greed, of earthiness, of self, of meanness, shown in the blaze of that day, would it not shriek out in terror, that heaven was the most horrible exposing place whereinto a poor wretch was ever driven?

I plead for man's sake, *that men may learn that Providence is benevolent.* One most ruinous influence at work in society is the general distrust in the vigilance of a power which befriends the right. Most men believe they can prosper more quickly and more surely by keeping an easy conscience than a pure one, by practising clever evasions of right than by boldly shunning all known wrong. To confront this unbelief, to demonstrate before all men that the Power above us does smile upon uprightness and generosity, is the high calling of every godly man.

You are not only to obtain your neighbour's admission that the Lord is King of the world to come,—they are ready enough to grant that: another point needful for their salvation is to bring them to feel that He is Lord and King of the world that now is. They easily believe that He is the disposer of crowns and harps hereafter; but they do not so easily believe that He is the disposer of dollars and cents! Doubting here, for the sake of the pressing to-day, they risk the infinite but unfelt to-morrow. Satan ever boasts, as he did to our Master, that both the good and the glory of this world are in his power, and that to whomsoever he will he gives them. To deny this claim, to maintain the opposite, to lead men to turn upward a reverent eye, and say loyally to the Lord of all, "Both riches and honour come of Thee," nothing is so effectual as that all God's servants shall sacredly honour Him with the first-fruits of their increase. Doing this, it will soon be seen that they who acknowledge Providence bloom in its sunshine, and that seldom indeed is one of their number struck with a blight. Bands—not here and there an individual, as much an exception in the church as in the world, but—large bands of open-handed men, whose works prosper and whose homes rejoice, will stand before the world living witnesses that we are not given over to the keeping of a demon who pampers wrong and famishes goodness.

I plead for man's sake—that men may learn that *commerce is benevolent*. It is not more hurtful than

wonderful how generally even good men look on commerce merely as an engine for fortune-making, and a field of battle for all the selfish passions. Even grave divines may be found calling commerce "the god of this world," with just the same propriety and truth as they, professing to quote Scripture, call money "the root of all evil." "Well, but is not commerce a hatefully selfish thing?" Is not weather a selfish thing? Both are appointed by Providence for the same end; both perverted by man to the same abuse. For the threefold purpose of provisioning, clothing, and adorning this world and its inhabitants, the Lord has made a great unconscious machinery of sky and sea, soil and air, and appointed intelligent workers to watch its processes, and complete the result. Neither weather nor commerce separately will suffice for the provisioning, clothing, and adorning of our world. Without the mechanical agents the intelligent workers are impotent; without the intelligent workers the mechanical agents revolve in vain.

The covetous underwriter makes the storms the servants of his creed; the greedy corn-speculator turns the blessed sunbeams into tools of gain; the bloodthirsty buccaneer makes the genial breeze serve as charger in his murdering onset. Looking at these disgusting perversions of the Lord's instruments, are we to forget that, above evil eyes and unholy hands, One is guiding the weather for the good of all? And coming into commerce—the providential play of intelligent agents for our comfort—

are we to look at the lower side, the motives of traders, and forget the higher side, the design and actual result wrought out by Providence? It is like the web of a cunning weaver: on the lower side you find only tangled threads, on the upper only blooming flowers. Look at commerce as regarded by the hearts of buyer and seller, and selfish indeed is the scene; look at it as designed, ay, as actually wrought out, by the Ruler above, and you see every man in a city provided by the hands of others with all things which earth can offer to his convenience, in such proportion as his means will command. Rise up, then, ye Christian men, ye who know a God, and bless a Providence, rise up, and testify that this commerce, which busies your masses, is not a lawless scramble, but a beneficent appointment whereby every one may become a co-worker with Heaven in plenishing and provisioning the homes of men! Let all see that, when well-won gains come into your hand, you have a joy in scattering them abroad, to spread temporal and eternal happiness among that race for whom all winds blow, and all markets are opened.

I plead for man's sake, *that practical benevolence may be increased*. Of all sources of happiness in a community, none acts so greatly and pervasively as a spirit of true benevolence. Nothing would so much assuage private griefs, or so greatly smooth the relations of class with class, as the general spread of that sacred brother-love, that true fellow-feeling,

which breathes so sweetly in our Christian Scriptures. That widows may not weep unconsolated ; that orphans may not roam friendless ; that wayward men may not pass a lifetime within sound of church-bells, without ever hearing inside their own door a word of loving exhortation ; that the poor may not be set against the rich by envy ; that the rich may not be estranged from the poor by contempt ; that real Heathens may not live and die in the heart of Christendom ; that nations of Pagans may not sit on and on in the darkness of their fathers ;—in a word, that this cold world may be warmer, and this troubled race have more joy, open your hand and give ; for man's sake, give !

I PLEAD FOR THE GOSPEL'S SAKE, that it *may be fitly represented*. That is not its own word ; but one almost fears to use its own, it is so strong. “That ye may *adorn* the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things.” *Adorn* that doctrine ! See it so pure, so bright, lovely in the likeness of its Author, and then say where is the life that is to be to it, not a veil to dim its beauties, not a spot to mar its charm, but an *ornament*—what a jewel is to the brow of a fair woman, an attraction for eyes and admiration !

Where is the life that really *adorns* the Gospel ? Surely it is not that of a man who calls himself a Christian, and yet to whom no one will turn in his need, as to a certain friend, for body or for soul. Alas for that man from whose door a neighbour in distress instinctively turns away ; to whom collectors

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for any holy work never think of going! O, who would rest under a roof upon which no man's blessing comes? Not long ago one rich man was letting a splendid seat to another rich man, and, mistaking the character of his customer, he stated, among the many attractions of the place, this great attraction: "*And there are no charities!*" Ah! lay not your dying head on that man's pillow!

The Gospel will be adorned only by men who, not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth, love their neighbour, body and soul;—by men in whom the character of Christ, to some extent, reappears, that character of love and self-sacrifice to which the glory of God and the salvation of man were the sole objects; wealth, or ease, or pride, nothing. Aim, then, aim at such a standard of beneficence as shall attract to the religion you profess the admiring eye of many, who before had seen in it no loveliness!

I plead for the Gospel's sake, *that it may be diffused*. The Lord's commission is, that we "go into *all* the *world*, and preach the Gospel to *every creature*." "To every creature!" Let us remember that injunction. While a human being lives to whom the good tidings of great joy have never been told, our commission is not executed. How much has been done already toward its execution? Half the race of man, and more, are this day without Preachers of the Gospel! And even within Christian lands numbers of holy works, for which the

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need is reproachfully plain, remain undone, because the church of God is not sufficiently self-denying to give the means. It is easy to sympathize with missions ; to applaud earnest speeches, and kindle with lively hymns. It is easy to feel a generous glow while we sing, in the words of Heber—

“ Waft, waft, ye wind, the story,
And you, ye waters, roll,
Till, like a sea of glory,
It spreads from pole to pole !”

But listen ! the winds are sweeping, and have been sweeping from the beginning, over the peaks of the Himalaya and on the shores of Lake Tsad. Now it is the rustle of the breeze, now the shock of the tempest ; but listen ! Does either sound on the ear of the Heathen the name “ JESUS ?” The waves are rolling, and from the beginning have been rolling, on the shores of Fijii and of Japan ; but does either the gentle ripple, or the boom of the mighty wave, sound the word, “ Mercy ?”

No ; if the story is to be told, it must be told by the voice of living men. And whence are the means to come, to send forth messengers to tell the tidings of grace “ *to every creature ?*” Dr. Morgan has said that some such change as was effected in science by the discovery of gravitation, or in mechanics by that of steam, would be effected in the powers of the church for good, by the general adoption of the observance for which we plead. And whether we look at our wealthy or our poorer

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churches, it is certain that were all their members but brought up even to the practice of giving a tenth, then would their ability to flood the earth with Christian agencies be increased to the astonishment of mankind; while our Societies, though in a lower degree, would put on a new, and hitherto unheard-of, might.

We are drawing near to the hour when we shall take flight from this shore for another. At whatsoever moment we depart, many other souls, from all lands, will be departing too. Who would wish that, in the flight of souls of which he will be one, the majority should be of those who had never heard of Jesus? If this is not to be our case, if that name is to sound on all ears, and to be invoked in all tongues, up and be earnest! Spare not your goods, that the poor in soul may be rich at last.

I PLEAD—reverently it must be said—FOR THE LORD'S SAKE. It is true that all idea of giving a benefit to Him is for ever excluded. "Is it any gain to Him that thou makest thy ways perfect?" The sun He has set in our firmament, has rejoiced our world from Adam until now. On him all its beauty and its life depend. Now that he is hidden, the rose has no blush, the lily no whiteness, the meadow no green; a cheerless gloom reduces them all to sameness. To-morrow when he re appears, all the beauties of the landscape will come forth anew. Suppose that then we were all seized with an impulse of admiration, and desired to show how much we

valued his services to man; not all the powers of our race could send him up a ray to make him grander.

He is the emblem of his Maker. In one eternal outflow, benefits stream from Him upon His creatures. Life, joy, redemption,—all come from Him. After ages of daily debt, were all our race this moment seized with a passion of gratitude, did every human heart ask, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits?” then, though every bosom throbbed, and every hand were strained, we could not add one ray to His glory, one step to the elevation of His throne, one hairbreadth to the extent of His dominions, or one moment to the duration of His reign. Inhabiting eternity, He sits “in the high and holy place,” as far above our power to benefit as to injure Him, equally incapable of accession and decay.

Yet He intrusts to us interests that are dear to Him; and, therefore,—

I plead for the Lord's sake, *that His image may be worthily reflected.* The inanimate works of His hand tell much of His strength and skill; the lower animals much of His wisdom to contrive and His might to control: but all this they tell not to themselves, but to their superior, man. They are but works of His, not children, who can show His image, or be “partakers of the Divine nature.” From them man can learn nothing as to his Maker's mind on moral questions, on the points whereupon the

deepest anxieties of the conscience turn,—right and wrong, justice, pardon, judgment, and the future. It is only through man that his fellow-men can see the image of God,—man, that wonderful creature, whose complex nature unites the lowest to the highest worlds, bringing matter, animal and spirit, into one being,—a being who, on one extreme, is equal with the clod, and, on the other, by the communing of the Spirit reaches to the throne of the Highest. In him, and in him alone, the image of the holy God may be so reflected, that men here shall learn to “glorify their Father who is in heaven.”

But how does he reflect this image who, professing to be a child of God, is yet known to delight in holding and in storing, but to feel a pain in giving? Nothing can be more strictly opposite to the Divine nature than this. The unceasing action of that nature is to pour out unrequited bounties. Return or gain it knows not; and so does it delight in bounty, that no man gives to another in the Lord's name, but He counts the deed as done to Himself. Blessed is that human being in whose goodness some mind first discerns glimpses of the goodness of God!

I plead for the Lord's sake, *that His claims may be vindicated.* I have already said, that many who are willing to look upon Him as God of the world to come, feel as if this world's property was not so directly His and under His hand. For the Creator's glory and the creature's rest, it is needful that all be

taught that the gold and silver, the harvest's yield, flocks, herds, and fisheries, are all His property; that whatsoever man has in his hand, is there only in trust and stewardship, not created nor yet retained by his power; that a Hand unseen can at any moment empty his hand, and a Mind unseen blight the fruit of a life's prudence, by the mistake of a day.

Go, then, and assert the Lord's claims; go and teach man's stewardship, not in word, but in deed. Steadily devote the first-fruits of all wherewith you may be intrusted to holy uses. Let your daily actions say in your neighbours' ears, "Freely ye have received, freely give!"

I plead for the Lord's sake, *that His due praise may be rendered*. In speaking of the effect of Christian liberality, St. Paul tells us that it does not stop at those who are benefited, but passes on, in a certain sense, to the Lord Himself,—“abounds by many thanksgivings to God.” To abound does not mean to suffice, but to more than suffice; not only to fill a vessel, but to wave out, or overflow from it. Thus, when an act of Christian goodness fills a suffering heart with joy, it not only thanks the human hand that comforts it, but overflows in the words, “THANK GOD.” There is an ear, an open ear, which never closes to the cry of want; but when it listens from heaven to the children of men, to hear if there be any that thank God, often it listens in vain,—often hears praises for the creature, murmurs and

blasphemies for the Creator. O, would you count it a little thing, if, through your own deeds, that ear, ever and anon, heard a fervent "Thank God?" Of all the hands that make melody, none raises such music as his whose touch on the heart-keys of the despairing changes a murmur into a thrilling "Thank God!"

Give, then, freely give, that some poor man who was ready to think that charity was dead on earth, and mercy in heaven, may bless you; and, feeling that it was God who sent you to his side, may cry, "Thank God!" Give, freely give, that the sons of heathen fathers, of cannibals and demon-worshippers, may make scenes which have echoed only to whoop, or yell, or din of orgies, resound with the Christian "Praise God!"

I PLEAD FOR YOUR OWN SAKE, *that you may prosper*. The habit of statedly giving first-fruits of all you receive, tends to prosperity, by the double force of a natural means and a Divine blessing. As a natural means, it works by promoting order and economy. One reason why many tradesmen fail is, that they do not in due time, and with sufficient frequency, ascertain precisely where they are. He who is *determined* that all his increase shall pay its first-fruits to the glory of his Saviour, must ascertain what that increase is. Again: one reason why many persons of fixed income are miserably before their means is, because they have never carefully apportioned to each branch of their expenditure its

due share of their income. Were one portion held sacred, on which no claim whatever should touch, an efficient check would be set up against random living.

The habits of order and economy thus acquired would work together with the blessing which is assured to him who honours the Lord with the first-fruits of all his increase. That a man living steadily up to this principle will prosper, I have no manner of doubt. I once asked a valued friend of mine who had adopted the principle of giving away a tenth in early life, and whom the prospering hand of God had raised from humble beginnings to a position of great and valuable influence, if he ever knew a case in which a man had set out on that principle, and *persevered in it*, and then failed in life. He answered, "Not one."

Worldly men are often led to doubt whether a blessing does attend the labour of a pious man; for they see men who profess religion suddenly brought down. But they must ask whether these men have been faithful to their religion. It often happens that one who begins life well, and is liberal while he has little, yields to that fatal tendency which is strong in all to love money in proportion as it increases. As they become richer in hand, they become poorer in heart. As they acquire more, they give less. I have heard of one who had, when poorer, been in the habit of giving five dollars to a certain good work; now that he is wealthy, he gives half a dollar. And only the other day I heard of a miserable

creature, who is what we call a *very rich man*, who, when applied to in a very urgent case by two Ministers, for a family in need, did at last promise a dollar. But meeting one of the Ministers afterwards, he told him he found he could not give it; for he had so many houses, and had now to pay an increased tax, that he could not spare so much. Ah! how such copper souls are to be pitied! But, these cases only represent a large class. And is it to be wondered at, that if religious men thus allow gold to choke up the springs of feeling, the Lord should smite them? You worldly men, do not judge by such cases! These men were false to their religion, and it is fitting that a blight should overtake them:—indeed, that blight may be their salvation. But he who steadfastly sets apart for the Lord the first portion of all his gains, checks his love of money on the threshold; and by increasing the proportion as his gains increase, he checks the terrible bent to a progressive love of it; so that it is safe for himself, and good for the church, that he should prosper. But how can he prosper who gives a tenth of little, but, when Providence makes it much, thinks his tenth too much to give? Even to that depth of baseness can our poor nature go. Such men, not only in substance, but in very form, “rob God,” and may be met by Him with that stark and frightful charge. And if it may be said of other wrongful modes of getting wealth, surely it may of this: “As a partridge sitteth on eggs and hatcheth them not, so he that getteth riches, and

not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool."

I plead for your own sake, *that you may escape the curse of a carnal mind*. It is possible for a man so to drown his spiritual powers in sordid passion, that the soul within him ceases to have any action but for concerns of the market. Of its high faculties he cannot rob it: it is, and it will be, a soul, with the inherent lights and forces of a soul. But all these he presses into the ignoble service of pelf-gathering. It still has its judgment, capable of deep and holy themes; but this is kept ever poring upon problems lying within the two columns,—dollars and cents. It has its imagination; but this, instead of taking flights to a better country, only dwells on more gold, more houses, more land, more state. It has its fear; but this, forgetting all things really fearful, shudders at nothing except losses. And even its hope, though unquenchable, aspiring only after property, does not wing the soul for heaven, but earths it deeper in pelf. Thus the poor soul is totally shut out from its native air, and the whole man sinks into a machine,—a most wonderful and elaborate machine, worked by spirit-power, for the single use of scraping, scraping, scraping gold!

There are hundreds of souls in this city just like that; and if you would not have your soul degraded into mere spirit-power for working a gold-rake, spring up, and, appealing for help to the Spirit who

is over all, go and teach your hands to do works of generosity, instead of teaching your soul to do works of pelf.

I plead for your own sake, *that you may increase in purity and heavenliness of mind.* It was our Redeemer who first showed the way to make money a means of inclining our affections toward the inheritance of the saints in light. He said: "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old," (is not this what you would covet? "*bags which wax not old?*") "a treasure in the heavens, where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth." Now, mark the philosophy of this: "*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*" So that, by gradually laying up your treasure in heaven, your heart will gradually follow it there; and thus money, which some treat as capable only of being a bond and a burden, may become to you a connecting wire with the Throne of retributions, and a stimulant to hope for "the resurrection of the just." A farmer who loves to see a full barn, and also to receive in market the price of his crops, yet foregoes the market, and reduces the store in his barn, casts away his precious grain out of his hand, out of his sight, and leaves it buried, lost as to immediate return, trusting it wholly to the bosom of earth, and the eye of Heaven. What effect does this portion of his treasure produce upon him? It turns his thoughts away from the barn, from the market, from the pride of

the one and the gold of the other. It leads his eye often up to the heavens, and his thoughts forward to the coming harvest-day.

Go, then, and sow, not sparingly, but bountifully. Foregoing the proud store, foregoing the present recompense, cast your treasure out of your grasp, out of your sight, cast it with a broad hand and a glad heart; leave it there unseen in the soil of eternity, and under the suns of heaven. Even here the fruit will be, that by degrees, your mind will set itself more strongly on the joys that never wane: and when the harvest-days set in, how many will be fain that they had sowed as you!

I plead for your own sake, *that you may have some good of your money, even to eternity.* In the passage just referred to, our Redeemer shows how we may, by a heavenly use of earthly goods, lay up treasure in heaven. An Apostle tells us of another treasure which, by means of money, we may “heap together for the last days.” But this is a treasure of “miseries that shall come upon you.” He who, to amass wealth, keeps back the labourer’s hire, or falls into other “fraud,”—surely not excepting the fraud which deprives the Lord of the beneficent use of His own gifts,—is, in heaping up money for this world, heaping up “treasure for the last days.” While the gold and silver distributed for the Lord’s sake, to benefit the souls and the bodies of men, will all be found turned into incorruptible treasure “at the resurrection of the just;” this gold and silver

which no thank-offerings hallowed, and no poor man blessed, on which the eye of the needy looked wistfully, and for which the works of God's church appealed in vain—this, too, will re-appear; its "*rust shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire.*" This, O money-lover! is the way in which you have heaped treasure "together for the last days!"

"O, I have not been selfish! It is not for myself I have got something together. I know I must leave it. It is for my children I have saved." Well, perhaps it would have been a blessing to your children, had they been left just with the means of honourably starting in life, the rest depending, under God, on their own conduct. Perhaps the stores you have painfully gathered will breed contentions over your grave, and then hurry your children to folly and to sin—ay, perhaps to poverty.

You have saved for your children! We are ready to admit that, in this, if moderately done, you are a public benefactor; for he who finds a family competing with the poor in the labour market, and leaves it in a condition to employ them instead of competing with them, does a general service. But while you have been saving for your children, what have you saved for yourself? In a week your will may be read; and is it possible that all the savings of your life are invested where they will then be in the hands of others, and nothing invested where it will come to account for you? As with our life, so with our money: he that saveth his money shall lose

it; and he who, for the Lord's sake and the Gospel's sake, loses his wealth shall find it. The only money we save for ourselves is what we give to the Lord.

The same sentiment is quaintly expressed on an old monument in the parish church of Leek, Staffordshire:—

“As I was, so be ye;
As I am, ye shall be;
That I gave, that I have;
What I spent, that I had.
Thus I end all my cost:
What I left, that I lost.”

From the moment you depart hence (and how long is that moment away?), not one cent of all you ever handled will remain to you, except that which you freely gave away. When all the rest is in the hands of others, this will abide for you, and at the great day will be apportioned to you, in new forms, and with wondrous increase, before all eyes that ever counted gold, or ever melted with benevolence. Then, if you would save anything for yourself, if you would have any enjoyment from your possessions beyond this uncertain life, go and “put on Christ:” let your own character disappear under His; your own modes of judging and acting give place to His. Give yourself first to Him, and then to the church and the good works the church has to do; and then shall you “lay up in store against the time to come.”

“Ah, but I should not like to die poor!” Not like to die poor! For my part I should wish to die rich. WHO DIES RICH? He who, whether he leaves much, or little, or nothing behind him, has treasure laid up in heaven. *He dies rich.* WHO DIES POOR? He who, whatever he leaves behind him, has nothing laid up before him. *He dies poor.*

SYSTEMATIC BENEVOLENCE.



“Remember the words of our Lord Jesus, how he said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”—Acts 20: 35.

“On the first day of the week, let each one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”—1 Cor. 16: 2.

WE have in the first of these passages a memorable saying of the blessed Master which the writers of his life had not recorded, but which Paul, under very interesting circumstances, repeats, and Luke hands down to us, by placing it in the inspired records. In the second passage quoted we have a specific direction of Paul to the Corinthians, with regard to the proper manner of discharging the duty referred to in both passages, i. e. contributing money to objects of religious benevolence. In the first passage, the *universality* of the duty, but especially the privilege of *giving*, is presented: in the second, the duty of giving *systematically* is enjoined.

Jesus Christ is our great pattern for imitation. His teaching we are bound to receive. His injunctions we are under the strongest obligations to obey. Paul exhorts us, to “follow him as he followed Christ.” The command in the text repeated, is not given by Paul’s authority merely, but comes with the authority of Paul’s Master. It contains sufficient authority for collecting money for religious purposes, on the first day of the week, the Christian Sabbath, as a part of public worship; and a specific direction to attend to this business systematically and at stated periods.

Our Saviour, in the sentiment quoted from him, represents it as a great *privilege* to give to objects of religious benevolence. It is not merely a duty, but there are great

advantages to the giver;—he is “blessed” in the deed. It is assumed that the person who *receives* the benefaction, is benefitted by it. This supposition, on the part of the giver, at least, is essential to the idea of benevolence. *But the advantages to the giver, are greater than to the receiver. “It is more blessed to give, than to receive.”* There is more happiness in giving.

From Paul’s manner of repeating this declaration to the Ephesian Elders, it would seem to have been very familiar to the followers of Christ,—one which they had very frequently heard him use when speaking of benevolence, and urging them to give liberally. He reminds them of it, and calls upon them to remember this well-known saying of the Lord Jesus. That he gave to benevolent objects, though poor in this world’s goods, and taught his disciples to do so, is made very clear by the history of Jesus. As to his circumstances, he ‘had not where to lay his head,’ and obtained only by miracle money to pay his tax and that of his apostles. Yet he had in his little family a Benevolent Society, with its regular treasurer.—The person appointed treasurer, probably by a popular vote, proved a thief, and stole the money. This circumstance should admonish us not to entrust such funds to the covetous—“not to those greedy of filthy lucre.”

It was the practice of the Lord Jesus to direct funds from their treasury, from time to time, to be given to the poor. So common a thing was it to make such drafts on the treasury, that when Jesus at the table told Judas, ‘What thou doest, do quickly,’ the other disciples thought he meant that a donation should be made to the poor.

This duty of benevolence, he taught constantly, both by precept and example. The principal motive by which he enforced the duty seems to have been, *the advantages of giving*. He would have his followers, in seeking their own happiness, to cultivate a spirit of benevolence, and find enjoyment in promoting the happiness of others. Thus they would become like God, and cultivate the graces and dispositions that promote real happiness. His own blessing which maketh rich and addeth no sorrow, would be bestowed upon those who gave from proper motives. So that they would be blessed indeed. This oft-repeated and favourite expression was, ‘It is *more blessed to give than to receive*.’ But did his disciples believe him? Probably they did, with the exception of Judas.—He certainly, did not believe a word of it, as his actions show. He evidently

thought it more blessed to receive, though by theft, than to give.

How many of his disciples *now*, believe his word? Faith must be manifested by works. The faith that does not produce works, "is dead," or no faith at all. Words are cheap, but actions are the true index of the sentiments of the heart. "By their *fruits* ye shall know them." This is a rule of common sense as well as of Scripture. I ask then,—be not startled at the question, though it be one of solemn import—I ask, how many of his professed disciples believe Jesus Christ? How many, believing it to be more blessed to give than to receive, are constantly seeking opportunities of attaining this blessedness? All men desire to be happy, and if they really believe that giving has a tendency to make them happy, they will desire to give;—they will give cheerfully, joyfully, unsolicited. They will not wait to be asked, urged, importuned to give. They will not wait for an agent to call, and press, and persuade them, and even then, manifest an unwillingness to give. Men have not to be urged and importuned to accept of happiness, or to do what *they* believe will contribute to their enjoyment. You have not to force a hungry man to eat.

Occasionally, to be sure—and to the praise of God's grace be it said—we hear of a father or mother in Israel, coming to their pastor, or elder, or deacon with a few dollars, asking to have it appropriated to the cause of missions, or some other object of religious benevolence. There are some who seem to "enjoy the luxury of giving;" and plan and labour, that they may be able to give. But, alas, so rare are such cases, that such persons are looked upon as singular. Do our church members and officers generally, believe that it is more blessed to give than to receive? Do not many rather regard it as a happy escape, if the collector should pass them by, or they should happen to be absent when a collection is taken! The agent does not call, and it is regarded as so much *saved*—a clear gain—and he gives himself no further concern about it! And how do our congregations feel and act? They are but the aggregate of the members; and the feelings of the members are the feelings of the church. The agents of our Boards fail to call on a particular church, and for that very reason, often, no collection is made. Now if they regarded it as a "blessed" privilege to give, would they forego the privilege, because no agent visits them? Certainly not. Pastors often neglect their duty of pleading the cause of benevolence before

their people, and inviting them to give ;—it may be, in some cases, because *they* do not consider it “*more blessed to give,*” and are therefore not ready to set their people an example in that respect,—but no collection is taken ;—and do the people complain of the pastor for neglecting his duty, and not affording them the privilege of giving ? Are they not more apt to find fault when he does his duty ; tells them it is more blessed to give than to receive, and invites them to enjoy the privilege of giving ? Do they believe the saying of Jesus Christ ?

Suppose the elders and deacons neglect to make any arrangement, for taking a collection : do the church members chide them for neglecting their duty in reminding *them* of the privilege of giving ? Are they not more apt to be blamed when they conscientiously fulfil, to some good extent, their offices, and have these matters all attended to with order and regularity ?

When a collection is taken, if every man were allowed the choice either to give or receive according to his views of the relative advantages of each ; he who regards it as more blessed to give, would give, and he who thinks it more blessed to receive,—provided it were considered right and honourable—would receive. We have something like this test, in the arrangements of our Board of Missions. Those congregations that are able to give, are invited to do so, in order that those which need aid, may receive it. Now how many congregations, able to support their own pastors and assist others, are yet willing to receive rather than give ! It must be, because they think it better, more advantageous, more blessed, to receive than to give. Again : the faith of congregations, with regard to giving and receiving, will be tested by the building fund of the “Church-extension Scheme.” The design is, that needy congregations shall receive, while others give, for the erection of houses of worship. But if any apply for a share of the fund, who ought to contribute to it, it will be because they think it better to receive than to give.

It is not necessary now to stop long, to show that it is the duty and privilege of *all* to give to objects of religious benevolence. Benevolence is of the very nature of the religion of Christ. His own holy heart was full of benevolence, which led him to the most astonishing self-denial. He divested himself of the riches and glory of heaven, and became poor and despised, because of the overflowings of compassion in his benevolent soul. His spirit must be pos-

sessed, and his example imitated by all his disciples. "*If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*"

To be a follower of Christ, or, in other words, to be a Christian, implies necessarily the imitating of his example. The disciple may be poor and destitute, as was his Master, but yet he may have the blessedness of giving. It is required of him according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not. There is less required where only one talent is given than where there are two, five or ten. But that one talent must not be buried in the earth. Each one is required to improve what he has, as he shall answer when his Lord comes to reckon with him and demand an account of his stewardship.

There are many and weighty reasons urging every member of the Church of Christ to give cheerfully and liberally to the cause of religion. The preaching of the gospel to every creature, is made the imperative duty of the Church. She must give the gospel to the *whole world*. "How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?" No duty is more plainly enjoined in the New Testament, than that of supporting the ministry, and the means of grace in general. The training of men for the ministry, and supporting them in destitute places, and using all appointed and proper means of spreading religion and converting the world, are the solemn duty of the Church of Christ. Who but an infidel would deny it? This is her high calling—the grand purpose of her organization. But what can the Church do, except through her members? It is necessarily implied that each of her members must feel his individual obligation, and do his part by labours and contributions. No individual, old or young, male or female, can escape the responsibility. But can the disciple of Christ *desire* to avoid such a responsibility? Can the *redeemed sinner* be destitute of gratitude to his Redeemer, and of zeal for his glory? Can the *renewed soul* be devoid of compassion for his fellow men? Can he think of the *love of Christ*, who became poor, that lost men might become rich, and not feel constrained by it to imitate his Master's example and give cheerfully and liberally?

Whatever moving and constraining motives drawn from the love of God and zeal for his glory, and the miserable condition of a dying world, can be presented, ought to have their due influence on the hearts and lives of all the disciples of the Lord Jesus. But if they can be persuaded—fully *persuaded*—that Jesus spoke the truth when he said,

‘It is more blessed to give than to receive,’ no other motive will be needed. They will then give, cheerfully, abundantly. They cannot be restrained from giving.

The history of his Church proves the truth of this saying of Jesus. Where is the Church that has given regularly and liberally to benevolent objects, and cherished a deep interest in the general cause of religion, that has not been richly blessed in spiritual gifts? Or, where shall we find the individual Christian who has thus felt and acted, who had not proportionably grown in grace and enjoyed the rich consolations of the gospel of Christ? Here it is emphatically true,—and it is a blessed truth—that “there is that giveth and yet increaseth.” It is a glorious truth, that “he that watereth, shall be watered also himself!” How many “liberal souls have thus been made fat!” There are at least some that sow bountifully, and according to God’s gracious promise, “reap also bountifully.”

Besides these better, spiritual blessings, we are authorized to conclude that *temporal* blessings shall be bestowed where Christian liberality abounds. “He that hath pity on the poor, *lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given, will He pay him again.*” Those are emphatically “*poor*” who are destitute of religious privileges and advantages. They will not be defrauded who lend their funds to the Lord. Assuredly, he will repay it, often, in kind. Many facts in the private history of individual Christians, show, that the Lord often repays in *the kind that was lent*, in addition to spiritual blessings. There is no danger of Christians becoming poor by lending to the Lord, or giving liberally to religious objects. No one who is willing to trust the Lord, need fear coming to want in consequence. But on the contrary, how many are “cursed in their basket and in their store,” and cursed with spiritual poverty and leanness of soul, for the sin of covetousness! “*There is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty.*” The churches that do little or nothing for objects of religious benevolence, feel but little interest in the spread of religion, care but little for the conversion of the world, are in a dwindling, unpromising, generally in a dying state. They are like the heath in the desert—like the mountains of Gilboa—they are without rain or dew—without verdure or life. “Ichabod” is written upon them—the glory is departed. The blighting curse of the Lord is upon them, for they “have robbed God.” Nor need they expect his blessing until they bring “the tithes into his

storehouse." The strength and vigour of living piety is not only manifested, but increased, by active efforts to spread itself over the world. Religion is, in its very nature, diffusive. Like leaven, it will operate and extend itself, where it really exists. It cannot even live, without action.

Truly, truly "it is more blessed to give, than to receive," even in *this* world. He that "honoureth the Lord with his substance, and with the first fruit of his increase," may confidently expect the gracious approval and blessing of the God of providence and grace.

As it is the undoubted duty and privilege of all to give, it is a question of great practical importance, What method shall be pursued in collecting the contributions of the churches? Or shall there be *any* system? Paul lays down a plan or system, in the passage already quoted from his first epistle to the Corinthians. The plan is wise, simple and practicable. He directs that contributions be regularly and systematically made at stated times. In that particular church in the *city* of Corinth, it was expedient and proper that the collection should be weekly. The same direction he says he had previously given the churches of Galatia. The circumstances and mode of life of the members, rendered it practicable, and probably not very inconvenient, to make a weekly collection. In this respect it may be different in other churches. But the principle laid down, we think for all churches, is, that *there must be fixed periods*, more or less remote, of which all shall be apprized, when all are to have their contributions ready. The amount to be given by each, is not definitely fixed,—as it was under the old dispensation, at one tenth—yet Paul gives us a rule. The amount is to be graduated by the prosperity that the Lord has given. Every man is to examine into his affairs at stated periods, make his calculations, and give according to what God has given him. If the Lord has prospered him but little, he may give but little; if he has been much prospered, he is to give accordingly: if the Lord has not prospered him at all—given him *nothing*—he has nothing to give. The direction is, "as God hath prospered him." Whatever he possesses as a steward, is owing to the prosperity which the Lord, the owner, has granted him; and the amount which he is at any one time to return, he must himself determine, as he shall answer when he gives an account of his stewardship. Jehovah himself settled the point by a law of the old dispensation, that men could *afford* to give one tenth of their increase for religious purposes.

But now they are to determine the amount they will give for themselves. If they think the privileges of the Christian Church less valuable than those of the Jewish dispensation, they will give less: if they think them more valuable, let them give in proportion. Let "each one give as God hath prospered him." Let the proportion be according to their various estimates of their privileges and obligations. If they estimate these aright, and believe it more blessed to give than to receive, they will give liberally. Paul had no fears that too much would be given—though the churches of Macedonia had once been willing to go beyond their ability—but took it for granted, that the demand will always exceed the supply. Let there be a perfect system in the matter, every one laying by him weekly, and giving from principle, and waiting not for a special call, and moving appeal. He would thus guard against the plan, so common and so injurious, of depending on special and moving appeals, which cause an impulsive and spasmodic action. He would have the church act from principle, and make the "collection for the saints" the regular business of every week. He would have Christians give regularly to benevolent objects, from a sense of duty, according to rule, and at stated times.

Paul was now filling the place of a *general agent* for benevolent purposes, and writes to the church beforehand to be ready for him when he should visit Corinth. "I intend to make you a call in due time, and receive your contribution. But I wish you to have your collection made beforehand, and in readiness. Have a systematic plan of attending to such business. Let each one attend to his own duty, and lay by, as the Lord hath prospered him. And let the officers of the church receive it on the Sabbath, and lay it up," *"that there be no gatherings when I come."* "If the collections are made beforehand, as they should be, when I call, I shall have only to preach the gospel as long as circumstances will allow—probably all winter—without being hindered with making collections; and then pass on, taking your contributions with me, or forwarding them by such persons as you may designate." It is implied that Paul would have to pass round from house to house, to solicit donations, and do the work of the deacons, unless collections were made beforehand. "Relieve me from this labour, says he: Let there be no gatherings when I come."

We think these six general principles are established by this passage, viz.

1. *Each one should give.* "Let each one lay by him."
 2. This giving is to be done by *system, as a regular thing*, and not by mere impulse.

3. It must be done at *stated times*. At Corinth it was to be weekly. At other places, and under other circumstances, monthly or quarterly, may be sufficient. But let there be *stated periods in all cases*.

4. *The amount given is to be graduated by rule.* "As God hath prospered him." Each one for himself is conscientiously to apply this rule.

5. This is to be done *without the solicitation of travelling agents*. "No gatherings when I come."

6. *But if this be not done, then there is a necessity for employing agents to do the work which the churches ought themselves to do.* Then "*the gatherings*" must be made "*when*" the agent "*comes*."

There has been much said for and against the "agency system," in our day. Into this controversy we design not to enter. But we think that the true ground on the subject may be ascertained from the passage we have been considering. It is the duty of ministers, elders, and deacons, to attend to the whole business of collecting funds, without the necessity of employing any other agents. For in our country, where funds can be so easily transmitted, there is no need for agents to carry the collections to the benevolent treasuries. But if ministers, elders, deacons and churches, neglect their duties, then they create a necessity for employing others, as their agents, to attend to these duties for them. We know of no other way in which, without great injury to the church and her best interests, she can dispense with agents, but by doing her duty without them. Let the divinely appointed agents—the proper officers of the church—attend to their duties, and she needs no other agency.

It is the duty of the *minister* to be the *pleading agent*, to present the various objects of religious benevolence from the pulpit, and urge, by all suitable motives, the duty of giving systematically and liberally. He must make himself acquainted with the various objects, and have his own heart alive to their interests, and he will be a good and successful agent. Being acquainted with his people, their circumstances and feelings, as a stranger cannot be, he will, ordinarily, be the best agent, that can be employed. It is as much the pastor's duty to preach frequently and fully, on

Christian benevolence as on prayer, faith or repentance. With just as much propriety might he expect some body else to preach for him on faith, or repentance, or prayer, or any other duty, and excuse himself, as to expect agents to instruct his people for him, in the duty of giving. It is his own duty ; and wo to the pastor who neglects to urge upon his people the duty of preaching the gospel to every creature, and to declare to them the *whole* counsel of God. He is the proper agent to plead the cause of benevolence, and of a dying world before his people.

The *elders* of the churches, in connexion with the *deacons*, are to be the *planning agents*. It is theirs to second, in a more private way, the efforts of the pastor, to lay plans and devise schemes for the collection of funds, to circulate information, remove misapprehensions and objections, to reprove the negligent, and stimulate the tardy. In a word, they are to take a principal agency in erecting and maintaining a high standard of Christian benevolence. In order that they may perform these duties, they must be informed and interested themselves, on these subjects. Their duties, as well as those of private members, are to be explained and enforced from the pulpit.

It belongs to the *deacons*, to make personally, or to superintend the making of collections for religious purposes, and to take charge of, and distribute them : in brief, to do the whole business of the *fiscal agent* of the church and of her boards. This is their proper calling, and the whole matter belongs in an especial manner to them. If they "magnify their office," the standard of benevolence will be greatly elevated in our churches, and the treasuries of our boards be replenished according to their necessities. Shall we degrade them to the place of mere trustees to hold church property ; or at most, to a kind of ecclesiastical constables or tax-gatherers, to collect pastors' salaries, and procure bread and wine for communion purposes ? Then soon may we expect that scriptural office, so essential to presbyterianism, to go again into disuse. Wherever we have in our churches, scriptural deacons, we have the proper agents of our schemes of benevolence. Let them be honoured, and if need be, instructed in their duty, and let them magnify their office. To them, let the communications of our Boards be addressed, to be examined and considered, and if proper, laid before the people through the agency of the pastor. Let them compose a majority of all our Boards, so soon as the church can be brought to appreciate the im-

portance of their office. And if ministers and elders are to be made deacons, that is, *treasurers* and *collecting agents*, let it be by the appointment of deacons, acting in their primary Boards, or in the general Boards of the church.

And as the deacons are not rulers, let them, when necessary, consult the session and the higher church courts, and report to them at stated times, all matters of general interest connected with their sphere of operation. As their observation and advice may be very important, let them send up to the ecclesiastical courts, such suggestions and recommendations as they may judge likely to be useful.

As the pastor is the highest officer in the church, and is by office a teacher, as well as a ruler, much must depend on his diligence, wisdom and efficiency in the instruction of his people—including deacons and ruling elders—on this whole subject, and on his regular, forcible and prudent presentation of the proper motives to action. If he neglect these duties, but little will be done to good purpose. If he feel but little interest in these matters, he cannot expect his people to feel much. If he give but little, they will frequently give less. If he make no effort to persuade them that “it is more blessed to give than to receive,” they will be in danger of disbelieving or overlooking that important truth. It is the minister’s place to enforce, by his instructions, the duties of elders and deacons; but who will instruct and warn and admonish him? He has no ecclesiastical officer above him. But this is more than made up, by presbyterial supervision. To the presbytery, each minister is amenable. It is one object of this court, and one of its important offices, to exhort and direct and admonish the ministers of whom it is partly composed, regarding their varied duties. To superintend this whole matter of benevolence, and direct pastors concerning it, then, belongs to the presbytery. Here we have in the Presbyterian Church, a most beautiful and complete system, as efficient, probably, as any system compatible with religious liberty, can be. It needs only to be faithfully and efficiently carried out into practice, to secure the most happy and glorious results. No other organization is needed—a better could not be devised. Let it be honoured by being carried out and made efficient.

The collected wisdom of the presbytery, may digest a plan of operation to be sent down to the churches. Its influence may be employed to stimulate ministers and elders as well as deacons to the vigorous execution of the plan

adopted. And regular, written reports from sessions, will be essential to success. The mere passing of resolutions recommending a plan, however wise, will be of little use. The publishing of resolutions may effect something, but nothing very efficient and systematic need be expected without regular reports to presbytery. Thus, only, a feeling of direct responsibility will be created. One of the advantages of being associated together in presbytery, is, that we may assist, advise, prompt and stimulate each other in duty. Let the reports be concise as possible, but full and specific; detailing the whole efforts of sessions, together with the obstacles and results. Let them also present in detail the whole plan of operation, provided the plan recommended by presbytery be not fully adopted. These reports should be made at least annually. Then let presbytery faithfully admonish the delinquent, and send special injunctions to such churches as may need them. And here permit the suggestion, that it might be interesting and useful to set apart a particular evening or afternoon, during the sessions of presbytery, to hear these reports, and suitable addresses on the subject of benevolence and the general interests of our Zion, for the instruction and encouragement of the members of presbytery, and of the congregations, where from time to time they may meet.

I will next present a few of the advantages of a system by which *all* the members of our churches and congregations shall be called on to contribute at stated periods.

1. Our people will, in this way, give more from *settled principle* than from mere *impulse*. And thus far their religion will be something more than the mere spasmodic result of temporary excitement.

2. They will be more apt to give *cheerfully*. Knowing that all others are called upon to give, and having made their calculations and arrangements previously, they will not be so apt to give reluctantly, and merely to get rid of the importunity of an agent. "The Lord loveth a *cheerful* giver."

3. They will give with more *convenience to themselves*.

Having made previous preparation, and "laid by as the Lord hath prospered them," they will not experience the same difficulty, as now, on a sudden emergency, when an agent happens to call, in getting hold of funds to contribute. It is to be feared that now, many find it more inconvenient to contribute five dollars to benevolent purposes, than to pay ten or fifteen dollars of taxes. The latter, they expect

to pay about a certain time of the year, and therefore prepare for it, and have little difficulty.

4. For the same reason, people will usually give *more liberally* when they give by system, and at set times. If they 'lay by as the Lord prospers them,' they will find themselves so prospered, that they will be able to give far more, than without such system, they would have supposed. The man who conscientiously devotes to the Lord a certain proportion of his income—say one tenth, as the Jew did—will find, at the end of the year, that it amounts to far more than he would have given, or thought himself able to give, without a system. Should all our churches adopt, and vigorously prosecute, a good system, while none would find it burdensome, the treasuries of our Boards would overflow, and the churches be blessed in giving and in seeing the Redeemer's cause rapidly advance toward its final and complete triumph.

5. In this way *all*, rich and poor, would have the privilege and the invitation to give. The widow's mite would not be overlooked—the pittance of the poor would be carefully collected. If it is *more blessed to give* than to receive, all might enjoy that blessedness. Without such a system, not half of our communicants ever give any thing. It were far better for the churches, and the cause of religion, to have five hundred dollars paid by one or two hundred persons, than to have the same amount paid by one or two wealthy individuals, or even by twenty or thirty. By system only, can every one be reached, male and female, old and young, and all enjoy the blessedness of giving. Thus each will feel that he has a share in our Boards and plans of benevolence. He will feel interested in them, and pray the more for their success, because they are *his*.

6. By a regular system there is more apt to be due proportion in giving to different objects. If it should be left to the deacons to appropriate a part, or all that is raised, they will be able to distribute according to the necessities of the different boards. Or if a collection be taken at a certain season of the year, for each Board regularly, in its turn, the people will prepare for each, according to their views of its importance and necessities, and will not be so likely to say, "We gave all we had to spare for missions, and have nothing left for education."

7. *There will be no expense of collecting.* Without such a system, a great proportion of what is given, is sometimes consumed by the expenses of agents. The time, the ex-

pense, the wasting, severe and trying labours of travelling agents, may, by system, be measurably, and probably in time, entirely, saved. None would more rejoice in such a result, than our faithful and laborious agents.

8. Another advantage of such a system is, that *important objects at home*, would not be crowded out by the frequent visits and importunities of agents, not acquainted with the situation and necessities of the particular congregation. There may be no danger—there *is* no danger—of doing too much for the salvation of the heathen; but there is danger of doing too little for the salvation of our own country—of our near neighbours.

9. Last, but *not* least, among the advantages of system, we mention, *that it is the Lord's own plan*. Where general principles are laid down in the Bible, for our direction, it is our duty and our interest to carry out those principles honestly and consistently, so far as we understand their application. If we do not greatly mistake, we are clearly taught by the Holy Ghost to have a system, and stated times of giving, and to lay by us for the purpose, beforehand, as the Lord has prospered us. In following his directions, we may expect the blessing of God on ourselves and our labours.

Any system to be successful, must be vigorously prosecuted. Elders and deacons, but especially ministers, must take a deep and lively interest in it, and feel themselves responsible for its success or failure. If pastors feel this deep interest, and realize their solemn and awful obligation to attend to this, as well as every other duty of their office, they will be able generally to awaken a similar feeling and interest in the minds of elders, deacons, and private members of their churches. When the wail of a dying world, comes up upon their ears, and deeply affects their hearts, they will re-echo the sound in their people's ears, and awake a chord of tender sympathy in pious hearts; and all classes of real Christians, will know, experimentally, the blessedness of giving. The interest in the subject being deep and permanent, it will not be forgotten or thrust aside.

THE END.

SYSTEMATIC BENEVOLENCE.

DEAR BRETHREN—During the recent sessions of the General Assembly, at Buffalo, New York, overtures on the subject of Systematic Benevolence were presented, from several Presbyteries, requesting that the Assembly would take some order by which the churches and people of our connection might be led to adopt, and carry out some efficient scheme for sustaining our Benevolent Institutions by regular contributions to their funds. The subject was also brought to the attention of the Assembly in other prominent and emphatic modes. The Reports of our Boards gave utterance to the most earnest desire for securing the hearty and general co-operation of the church in all her courts, and by all the members of her communion, in the various enterprises with whose management they have been entrusted.

Deeply sensible of the intrinsic importance of the subject in all its bearings, and earnestly desirous to make some suitable response to their invitations to action, the Assembly, at an early stage of its proceedings, appointed a Select Committee, consisting of one member from each Synod represented, to which the overtures and other suggestions were referred. This committee, having carefully and maturely considered the whole subject, presented a Report, which was adopted by the Assembly with great cordiality and unanimity.

Feeling it to be very important, together with the resolutions based on that report, calling for action on the

part of the lower courts of the church, and the cheerful co-operation of the people, to communicate also the opinions and sentiments of the Assembly to all the ministers and churches, it was determined, in the want of time to recast the Report into the form of an Address, to publish the whole as adopted by the Assembly, with this brief prefatory statement.

The Assembly solemnly asks your earnest and prayerful consideration of the views here presented, and trusts that you will give all diligence in promptly and faithfully executing the duties herein enjoined on the churches and Presbyteries.

Report of the Select Committee on Contributions to Benevolent objects, presented to the General Assembly, May, 1854.

The Select Committee, to whom was referred the general subject of Contributions to objects of Benevolence, beg leave to report to the Assembly, as follows :

That they have carefully examined the various Memorials and Resolutions committed to them, and are satisfied that these documents express the sentiments of the great majority of the Assembly's Presbyteries on the subject of *methodical efforts for the advancement of Christ's cause and kingdom at home and abroad.*

Your committee, on reviewing the repeated recommendations of the Assembly to the churches, on the subject of contributing to the different causes of benevolence under its direction, are painfully reminded of the wide-spread indifference with which these recommendations have been regarded ; and hence they feel a great degree of embarrassment in entering upon the duty assigned them. They are persuaded, however, that the neglect with which the Assembly's action has hitherto been treated in many instances, is not so formidable as to be beyond the reach of

remedy ; and to point out that remedy has been the object of earnest and prayerful consideration on the part of your committee.

The extent of this indifference to the Assembly's recommendations, and through them to the Master whose stewards we are, is truly deplorable ; and imperatively demands the adoption of adequate measures for its removal.

An examination of the Assembly's Minutes for 1853, reveals some humiliating facts on this subject.

The total number of churches reported, was 2,879.

The whole number of churches reported as having contributed to the Board of Domestic Missions, was 1,322, being 112 *less than one-half the whole number of churches.*

The number reported as having contributed to the Board of Foreign Missions, was 1,063, being 371 *less than half*, and 104 *over one-third* the total number of churches.

749 churches contributed to the Board of Education, being 30 more than *one-fourth* of the whole.

And 440 churches made contributions to the Board of Publication, being 39 *less than one-sixth* of the whole number.

Your committee had not the statistics before them by which to ascertain the proportion that contributed to the Church Extension Fund, another object of benevolence frequently commended by the Assembly ; but they are satisfied that the facts would show a much greater deficiency on the part of the churches, than the lowest figures above recorded.

These statements exhibit, in the judgment of your committee, a lamentable disregard of covenant obligations by a *majority* of the Assembly's churches. And the force of these statements would be greatly increased, if the actual number of contributing communicants in the honoured minority of churches, could be distinguished

from those who give nothing to advance the cause of Christ through these channels.

Another item will add to these facts a darker shading. There are many non-communicants in these congregations whose donations materially increase the revenues of our Boards; and just in this proportion are the contributions of our covenanted membership diminished.

And still another consideration deserves to be noticed here. The sums paid to the Board of Foreign Missions outside of our church, the legacies bequeathed to the different Boards, and the private donations amounting to large sums in the aggregate, all go to prove that the collections taken up in a methodical manner in the contributing churches, constitute an annual offering totally unworthy of being laid by 220,000 redeemed sinners, upon the altar of consecration to Him who hath bought us with his own priceless blood.

If these facts could be drawn forth into the definite array of figures, the committee fear that only an aggregate minority of communicants in the contributing churches would be found to sustain methodically and conscientiously, the Assembly's cherished instrumentality of doing good to souls.

But there is another point of view from which any delinquencies of the majority of our churches should be examined. The degree of responsibility under any obligation is in proportion to ability to discharge it. Our Master has said, "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required;" and his apostle has said, "It is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." Now, it is notorious that a vast amount of wealth is harvested in the Presbyterian Church, and hoarded there, of which the Lord of the harvest receives not a tithe. In addition to this, a large proportion of the current funds which sustain the operations of trade

and business, pass daily through the hands of a numerous class of our communicants, leaving a profit in their possession; or, as the rewards of daily labour, providing abundance of the good things of this life. From all the channels through which money is acquired, with manual labour and without it, in which the present times have an unexampled distinction, and in which our churches largely share, how very small must be the proportion which flows into the treasuries of the Lord!

In the unparalleled prosperity which waits upon production and commerce, *there is a scriptural demand for an unparalleled increase of the funds of organized benevolence.* But your committee are constrained to say, that they look in vain for this result in the funds placed at the disposal of the Assembly's Boards. The enlargement of funds hardly keeps pace with the increase of churches and membership, and falls far behind the enlarged responsibility which accumulating means bring with them. In past seasons of ordinary prosperity, both the number and amount of our contributions should have been greatly multiplied, as we have already seen. When God bestows any good upon us, it is a law both of our moral nature and of his kingdom, that some expressive return should show our grateful sense of his mercies; and when he pours upon us *signal favours*, he expects an appropriate response. Your committee believe that through the length and breadth of the Presbyterian Church, that response which these times of temporal prosperity demand, *has, with almost no exceptions, been withheld.*

Another consideration, and the last one we shall notice here, is, *the daily enlargement of the great field of christian effort.* The theatre for exertion in the cause of Christ is as broad as the world; and access to important points at home and abroad, where sanctified labour may be successfully employed in opening rapidly but not im-

proved. Many fields lie waste, because God's people withhold from God's servants the means to enter and to cultivate them. When the highways are cast up among the nations by the King of Zion, he calls his servants to enter, and by the same act he calls for the means to sustain them. Our responsibility, therefore, widens with the expansion of the field before us. The calls are for the most part unheeded; and the glaring sins of indifference and covetousness rest upon the churches.

How can this adverse state of things be accounted for? Your committee might enlarge upon the causes, but prefer the less unpleasant task of suggesting a remedy.

But there are to any remedy certain barriers, which must be removed. One of these we mention with great reluctance, and yet we sincerely believe that there will be found in it a principal obstacle. We mean *the apathy of the teaching and ruling eldership* in relation to this entire subject. The criminal neglect of many churches to honour the Lord with their substance, and with the first fruits of all their increase, is occasioned in a great measure by the neglect of their teachers to expound faithfully and frequently the *law* of Christ's kingdom in relation to this obvious and explicit duty, explaining the scriptural *method* of obeying it, and the scriptural *motives* to obedience. The word of God on almost every page contains something in relation to this law, its motives, or its method. And in view of this fact, it is difficult to account for the prevalent error, which regards this duty more as *advice* than precept, and more as *optional* than obligatory, unless the solution is discovered in the remissness of the ministry, "rightly to divide the word of truth" on this particular point. Your committee would repel the charge of indiscriminately censuring our brethren in the Lord, whom we love and venerate as a pious, learned, and able ministry, to which many of us belong; but we appeal to the established

principle that faithful pastoral labour in the pulpit, and in the family, is followed sooner or later with commensurate success; and when applied to the point before us; the committee express their firm conviction, founded upon their own experience and observation, that not one of the Assembly's churches which enjoys the stated means of grace, would remain delinquent after receiving the faithful and affectionate instructions of the ministry on the scriptural law of beneficence, its motives, and its method. Give the people light, and by the help of God's Spirit they will walk in it. The want of information is, in many minds, a greater obstacle than want of disposition. The conscience of our people, enlightened by the Spirit of God, and regulated by the word of God, may be safely trusted on this or any other subject. The clergy and the laity of our beloved Zion believe that they draw nearer to the great Source of truth, in doctrine and in polity, than any other branch of the Church of Christ. If we occupy such a sacred nearness to the Fountain of infinite truth and love, let it be seen that our practice corresponds with our profession, and our progress with our advantages.

The committee quote from one of the resolutions placed in their hands, that "the doctrine of the scriptures interpreted by the Confession of Faith," is, "that collections for pious uses, are a part of the regular ordinances of worship on every Sabbath."* The truth should be plainly stated,

* *Form of Government, Chap. VII.*—The ordinances established by Christ, the Head, in a particular church, which is regularly constituted, with its proper officers, are prayer, singing praises, reading, expounding and preaching the word of God; administering baptism and the Lord's Supper; public, solemn fasting and thanksgiving, catechizing, *making collections for the poor, and other pious purposes*; exercising discipline and blessing the people

Directory for Worship, Chap. VI. sec. 5.—The sermon being ended, the minister is to pray, and return thanks to God; then let a psalm be sung; *a collection raised for the poor, and other purposes of the church*; and the assembly dismissed with the Apostolic benediction.

that while our creed is orthodox, the practice of many of our churches in this department of christian duty is heretical; and they are so far guilty of "holding the truth in unrighteousness." The question, whether *covetousness*, like any other sin, should not be disciplined, ought to engage in these days of Christ's coming, the profound attention of every Presbytery and every session; and no person, in the opinion of the committee, should be admitted to sealing ordinances, whose views on this subject are not clear and scriptural. Every member of the church, is under a solemn recorded obligation to do his part to sustain the cause of Christ. What his part is, he is left to determine in prayer before God, and in the light of the Divine word. He is a labourer in the vineyard, and must work. No excuse will justify, but absolute inability. Whoever is able to earn his living, is able to give something to Christ's cause. At convenient seasons, he should "lay by him in store, as God has prospered him," a portion of his earnings, for thank-offerings, to the Giver of every good. Let it be done with consistent liberality; for "the liberal soul shall be made fat." Let it be done cheerfully; for "God loveth a cheerful giver." Every communicant who is above the necessity of receiving alms, who withholds his gift, however humble, is guilty of the sin of "covetousness, which is idolatry." The Saviour pointed out a much loftier act of self-denial than the foregoing, when he commended the poor widow's donation, and valued her two mites, which were all her living, above the costlier contributions of ostentatious alms.

The wealth in the Presbyterian Church, in whatever form it may exist or circulate, is *consecrated wealth*. It became so, by the act which received its possessors into membership. And your committee are convinced, that the practical denial of this truth clearly reveals one great cause of the decline of vital godliness, which extensively

prevails throughout all our borders, and over which this Assembly mourns. The tithes and offerings are not brought into the storehouse; and consequently, God's blessing is not poured out, and Zion languishes. Powerful awakenings are almost unknown. The ministry is not adequately supplied with recruits, nor adequately supported. Sinful conformity to the customs and fashions of a world lying in wickedness, and under God's curse, is rapidly levelling the distinctions which should be preserved erect and prominent, between the church and the world. This evil is the more dangerous, because its approach is gradual, and its inroads covered by specious pretexts, that wear the garb of christian propriety, which is a character frequently assumed by covetousness and pride.

In order to arrest these destructive tendencies, all scriptural means must be employed. But your committee are confined to one of these. And they would urge upon their brethren, the much disregarded truth, that *liberality is an indispensable means of grace*. To employ it successfully, the scriptural motives to beneficence should be fixed in the conscience, and influence the heart. These motives may be variously expressed; but we arrange them, for the sake of brevity, into three classes:

1. *Philanthropy* is one of these. But it is the lowest motive, and may be shared in common by the religious and irreligious. Where it exists as a controlling motive, it is guided more by emotion and sympathy, than by principle; and often leads the christian to find in worldly associations, the ways of doing good, to the partial or entire exclusion of the church, which is the great benevolent society formed by Jesus Christ, its Head; and thereby much of the means of usefulness, which ought to flow through sanctified channels, is expended upon measures of temporary or doubtful utility.

2. *Love to the souls of men* is another motive, which

elevates the preceding from the temporal to the eternal. It is philanthropy *sanctified*. It does not neglect the physical wants of man; but it values beyond every other estimate his spiritual necessities. The realities of death, judgment, and eternity, apprehended as not far distant, coupled with the awful fact, that the day of grace is hourly closing upon thousands of our fellow-men, present an overwhelming motive to sanctified exertion.

3. But there is still another motive, which absorbs the first and second, as the greater includes the less. It is a *supreme regard to the glory of God*. This is the highest motive that can be addressed to the conscience and the heart. It places all human interests in their true relations to our Maker. It consecrates time, talents, and property, to the service of Christ. It sets out from the right point of exertion, to relieve the temporal and spiritual wants of man. It is sustained by the approbation of conscience, and the favour of God. If the most benevolent plans, prosecuted under this paramount motive, should fail of success, and labour and means appear to be thrown away, the reflection that every act was done for God's glory, will extract the sting of disappointment; for God's will has been done, and the reward is laid up in heaven. This motive, therefore, supplies what no other can. It has less to do with mere human feelings and sympathies, and more to do with divine principles, which should regulate all the desires and susceptibilities of the soul. This is the motive which should be brought to bear continually upon the christian life and practice; and when its influence shall become paramount in all our communions, the Presbyterian Church will come up with one supreme purpose to the service of her Head, and lay her sons and daughters, and her costliest offerings, upon the altar of consecration to his cause.

Fully impressed by the facts and principles thus

briefly presented, we turn anxiously to inquire, in what way the General Assembly may, in the exercise of its legitimate power, endeavour to remedy the evils on which we have animadverted, and draw out the resources of the whole church, in sustaining the enterprises of christian benevolence, which have been wisely organized by the Assembly itself, or by other ecclesiastical authorities of our church.

As a fair exposition of the great principles of a scriptural church order, we believe our constitution now provides all the requisite organization for efficient effort, in every department of such enterprises.

The church is a divinely constituted missionary society, and its courts are specific forms of executive agency, for the work of propagating, as well as preserving the truth.

To the General Assembly, as the Supreme Court of the church, charged with the duty of providing measures, whose operations may be co-extensive with our ecclesiastical limits, "for the promotion of truth, charity, and holiness, in all the churches," properly belongs the work of presenting to the Presbyteries and other subordinate courts, and urging on their adoption and execution, by the moral power with which it has been intrusted, wise and practicable methods of procedure in all the departments of service, necessary to the fulfilment of the great obligations devolving on the church.

This duty can be performed without entrenching on any rights of conscience, neither "lording it over God's heritage," by enacting laws which require a blind and implicit obedience, nor arrogating to itself the province of the State, in laying taxes even for the support of the best interests which are connected with human duty and destiny. Its power is moral. It is that with which the church has clothed it. Though more than advisory, it is less than arbitrary. To those bodies, the Presbyteries, which, by

commissioners, constitute the Assembly itself, it can address the language of requisition to the discharge of duties clearly recognized and cheerfully admitted. The Presbyteries sustain a similar relation to the pastor and church sessions; the former, personally, and the latter by representatives, being their constituent elements. These, in turn, sustain a similar relation to the people, who have submitted themselves, under the laws of the church, and according to the principles of a moral government, to their authority. When, therefore, the various courts of the church have established instrumentalities for the promotion of religious knowledge, they are not only privileged, but bound to use the authority with which they have been entrusted, to procure the means, for rightly sustaining such instrumentalities, by devising the plans, and diligently supervising their proper execution.

It is easily seen, that were all the members of our communion to comply with the Scripture injunction, to give of their substance, for sustaining the cause of christian benevolence, "as God has prospered them," there would be a large increase in the incomes of all our schemes, whether connected with the church at large, as represented in the Assembly, or established by any of our subordinate ecclesiastical authorities. Now, to procure such contributions, it is not so material, that any particular plan be urged on the churches, in whose details all should agree, and according to whose provisions all should act. All that is properly demanded, is that the duty of securing the desired result should be urged, and its execution enforced. If an ecclesiastical court possesses the right to prescribe any particular duty, it must also possess the right to enquire into its performance.

According to these plain and simple principles, which are clearly and succinctly presented in the overture submitted by the Presbyteries of Lexington and Elizabethtown, we are prepared to recommend for the adoption of the

Assembly, the following Resolutions, which embrace in substance those presented in that overture :

1. *Resolved*, That this Assembly hereby enjoins upon the pastors of our churches, to give greater prominence in the ministration of the word, to the doctrine of the Scripture, as set forth and interpreted in our standards, (more particularly chap. 26, sec. 2, of the Confession ; in quest. 121 of the Larger Catechism ; in chap. 7, of the Form of Government ; and in chap. 6, sec. 5, of the Directory for Worship,) namely, that “ saints are, by profession, bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion, in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities, which communion, as God offereth opportunities, is to be extended unto all those, who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus,” “ giving and lending freely, according to their abilities, and in conformity to this doctrine, recognizing as one of the ordinances, established by Christ,” in connection with the sermon, prayer, and praise, a “ collection raised for the poor, and other purposes of the church.”

2. *Resolved*, The Presbyteries which have not anticipated the provisions of this action of the Assembly, are most earnestly and affectionately enjoined, (1) at their meeting following the rising of this Assembly, to take order, that the ministers and church sessions in their bounds, shall be directed to adopt *some practical method*, by which an opportunity shall be afforded, and an invitation given to all the members of their congregations, to contribute regularly to the objects of christian benevolence, recognized by the Assembly, in the organization of the Boards of the church, and to such other institutions as, to them, may seem right.

And (2) at every spring meeting to institute a proper inquiry into the diligence of ministers and church sessions, in executing the provisions of such method.

3. *Resolved*, The Presbyteries are further enjoined to

enter on record, and report to the next General Assembly, their action on the first part of the foregoing resolution, and also to record at their next, and all subsequent spring meetings, the result of the inquiry prescribed, and report the same to the General Assembly, with the usual annual Presbyterian Reports, stating the delinquencies and diligence of pastors and church sessions.

4. *Resolved*, There shall be appointed a standing committee on Systematic Benevolence, by the Assembly, which shall be charged with the reception and examination of such Reports, and the presentation to the Assembly of their aggregate results.

5. *Resolved*, The Boards of the church are invited to aid in the proper execution of the foregoing arrangements of the churches, by such official communications with the Presbyteries, as may seem proper.

6. *Resolved*, The professors of our Theological Seminaries are respectfully requested to give proper attention to the right training of the future pastors of the church, in view of the duties herein contemplated.

The committee also present as part of their Report, and recommend for the consideration of the church sessions and pastors, one or other of such plans,

FOR STATED AND REGULAR CONTRIBUTIONS,
as the following :

1. A committee may be appointed by the Sessions, for each object of benevolence, and a particular month assigned, in which they are to do their work, by calling upon the people, or otherwise obtaining their contributions.

2. All the objects to be aided may be presented in separate columns, and each contributor called upon to say what he will give quarterly or annually.

3. Weekly, or monthly collections may be taken up, and thrown into a benevolent fund, which the Session may divide among the several objects approved by them, in such proportion as they think proper.

THE GREAT GIVER.

THE Saviour of the world has many excellencies. He has no equals among men or angels. He is beyond comparison, the great Prophet, the great High Priest, the great King, the Sacrifice, the great Exemplar, the great Saviour, and the great Redeemer. He is also the great Giver. None gives as he gives. So he claims: "Not as the world giveth give I unto you." Let us see how this is.

The world gives things of little or no value. But Jesus gives the best things; things which cost him many tears and his heart's blood. He gives grace and glory, peace and righteousness, joy and salvation. He giveth songs in the night. He giveth us the victory. He gives crowns that fade not away, and kingdoms that cannot be moved. He gave himself for us. Oh, the unspeakable gift!

The world gives sparingly of the little it can bestow. It doles out a meagre pittance. It retains for its own use all it esteems most precious. It hardly throws scraps to the dogs. Many a one has actually died of starvation in the sight of abundance, and no man gave unto him. But Jesus gives bountifully. His grace is large. There is not room to receive his blessings. He gives good measure pressed down, and shaken together, and running over. His storehouse is full. His riches are unsearchable. Every believer may sing, "My cup runneth over."

The world gives grudgingly. At every step it reluctates. To yield up what it prizes is like parting with eye-teeth. Even a good man has need of the exhortation, "Let him give, not grudgingly, nor of necessity." But with Christ it is different. Even his sufferings for us were borne joyfully. "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame." "I lay down my life. . . . No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end." To his people he says, "All things are

yours." He withheld not himself. He withholds no good thing. He gives like a God.

The world gives expecting an equivalent. "Sinners lend to sinners to receive as much again." But man can make no adequate return to his Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, and Redeemer. "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?" "When ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants." Christ loved us freely. He accepts us graciously. We never can pay the debt of love we owe him. He does not expect that of us.

The world gives to its friends. Christ gives to his enemies. He gave new hearts and full pardons in one day to *three thousand* of his murderers. "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." "Christ died for the ungodly."

"Oh matchless kindness! and he shows
That matchless kindness to his foes."

"We love him because he first loved us."

The world often regrets the gifts it has made, and wishes it had them back. But the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Jesus revokes no promises. He never fails, nor is discouraged. He brings forth judgment unto victory. What he undertakes he accomplishes. By his grace and Spirit he gives repentance and faith. To these he adds courage, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. If Christ does one act of mercy towards a sinner, it seems but to prepare the way for many others.

The world gives unsatisfyingly. When it does its best, its beneficiaries still cry, "Who will show us any good?" They toil and pant, and still find that they are spending money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not. "Vanity of vanities" is the best thing

that can truly be said of all the world is, or has, or gives. But God gives us all things richly to enjoy. "When he giveth quietness, who can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? As one whom his mother comforteth, so does Jesus comfort his chosen. He satisfies the soul as with marrow and fatness.

The world gives deceitfully. "Trust not the world, for it never pays what it promises," said Augustine. It is circumspect of ceremonies, but it is heartless. It has no depths of tenderness. It is not sincere. "They speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts." "The words of his mouth are smoother than butter, but war is in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords." The world kisses, but stabs under the fifth rib. Its tender mercies are cruel. But Jesus makes good every promise, yea, he does exceeding abundantly, above all we ask or think.

The world gives when its favors are not needed. It sends presents to the prosperous, and makes feasts for the victorious. "Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself." But the poor are forsaken, the feeble are forgotten, the slandered are avoided. Yet Christ gives what we need, and when we need it—strength to the feeble, warning to the careless, comfort to the afflicted, salvation to the perishing. God's richest blessings are for the children of sorrow. The greater our need, the larger are his mercies towards us. He gives double for all our sins. He abundantly pardons. There is none like him. No gifts are like his gifts. They are so seasonable, so wonderful, so innumerable.

In the words which have been quoted from Christ, there is special reference to peace, one of Christ's best blessings. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." To give our peace to any one is to wish him well, to bless him, to declare good will and friendly intentions towards him. But Christ's legacy to his people was peace in truth as well as in words. "This comprised peace with God, peace of conscience, a

sweet serenity of mind, arising from confidence in God and submission to him, with the hope of heaven, and a disposition to mutual love and harmony." No gift ever excelled this.

The world is full of compliments, which may mean anything, or nothing. Its insincerity is the poor tribute it pays to goodness and virtue. But Christ is the Prince of peace. He came to guide our feet into the way of peace, and to bring glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will towards men. When he sent forth his apostles, it was with this salutation to every family: "Peace be to this house." In him we have peace. Yea, he is our peace. After his resurrection he twice said, "Peace unto you. Peace be unto you."

This peace passeth all understanding. Nothing can exceed it. Nothing can break it. It is the peace of God. It is efficacious. It quiets all fears and agitations. It is the fruit of the blessings bought by Christ. It is itself one of his chief mercies. By means of it we pass through tempests to our desired haven. There we shall be no more tossed with tempests for ever. There our troubled spirits shall be hushed and happy on the bosom of God eternally.

1. Is Jesus so great a Giver? Then let us prove our gratitude; let us love him as we ought; let us give him our whole selves; let us keep back nothing.

"Here, Lord, I give myself away,

'Tis all that I can do."

2. Is Jesus so great a Giver? Let us imitate him in kindness to the poor and needy. Let us give, expecting no return from men. Let us remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Benevolence is Christ-like, is God-like.

3. Is Christ such a Giver? Let us praise him, let us extol his amazing grace, let us glorify him. Praise of men, even the best, may easily become excessive. But none can too much laud the Redeemer. Glory be unto him, who was, and is, and is to come, the Almighty, the only Saviour; and let every creature say, Amen.



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